HM

THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE

Fireflight
Seabird
Before There Was Rosalyn
The Crucified poster
Dead By Sunrise
Deas Vail
Gwen Stacy
Wrench In The Works

LIVING SACRIFICE

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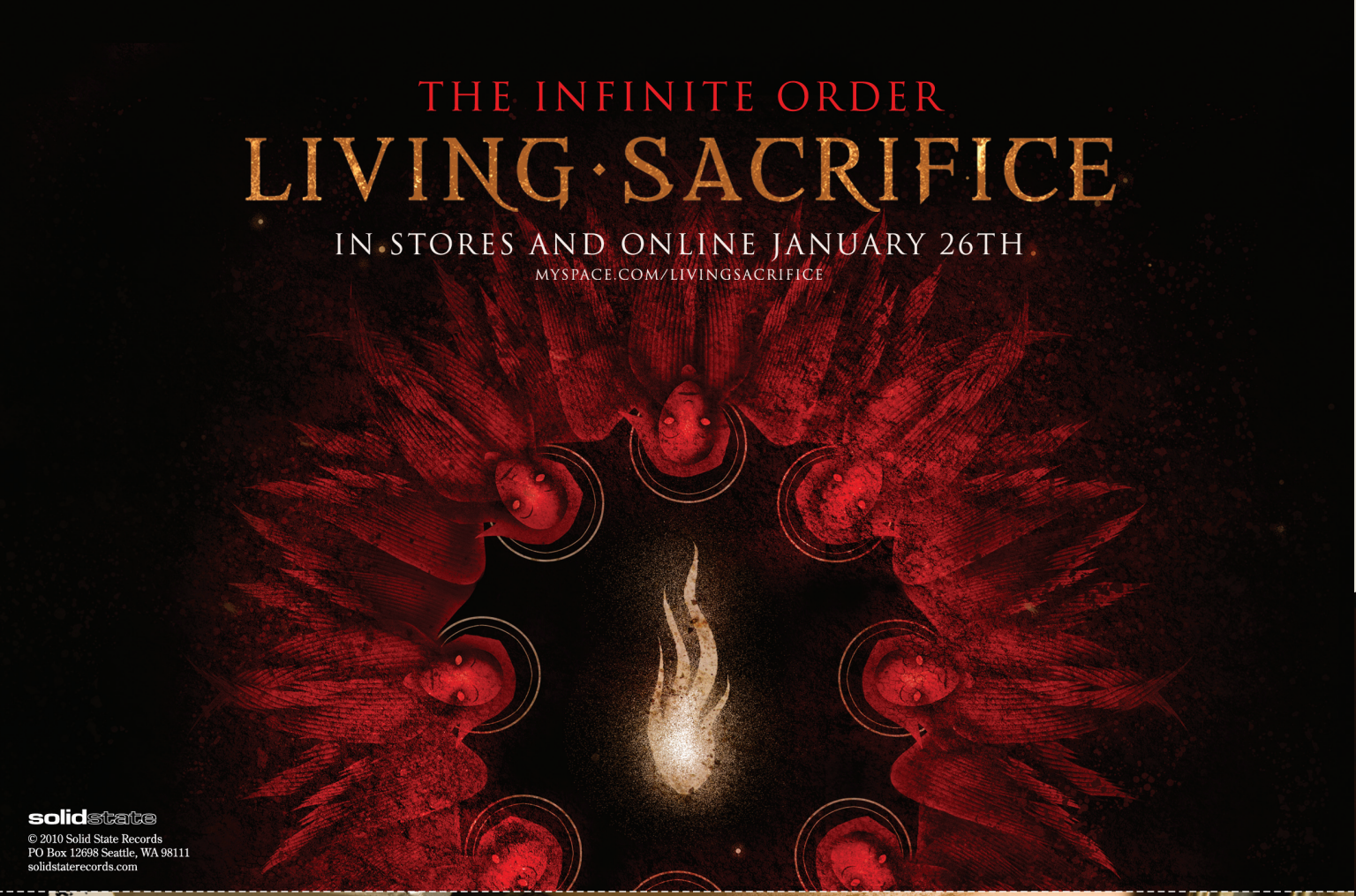
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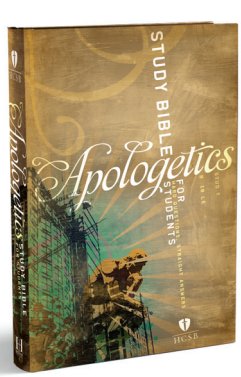

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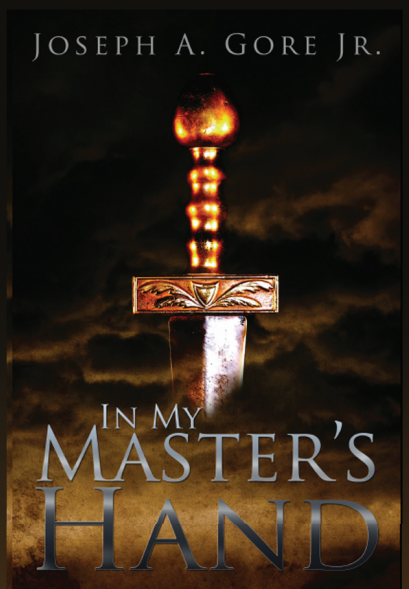

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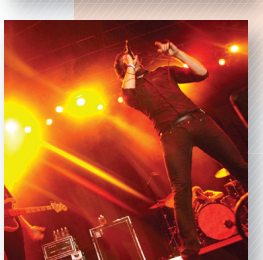

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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

CAN I LOOK THROUGH YOUR GLASSES A SECOND?

This has been the worst year in *HM Magazine*'s 24-year history ... at least in terms of ad sales. I guess the first two years don't count much, because as a little black & white photocopied fanzine the cashflow from subscription sales was enough to keep it going. The first ads we had were classifieds, but even the first few display ads were paid for in product, which we sold through some modest mail-order music sales. Small beginnings, but it wasn't long before this publication was like those other magazines on the newsstands – which base the majority of their income on advertising sales. Now, with a poor magazine economy on top of a bad music economy, it makes running a music magazine a real struggle these days. I'm not giving up, though. I think there's creative ways to learn, adapt, and grow with the changes. We've had struggles before as a magazine, and we've seen God provide during those times, so we know that He is trustworthy and a stable and strong tower to run to in tough times. If it was only about music, I'm not sure we would have the same determination to fight on. There's been a TON of great music to write about during this time, though. And there's been a lot of exciting developments to watch as real people grapple with real faith in a real world. It's not only awesome to watch, hear and experience some amazing music out there, but some of these music makers and enthusiasts (like you) are wonderful to be around. That is worth celebrating. So, while I've used this space to vent a little, I can't help but balance out the disillusionment and despair with hope and thanksgiving. I'm glad it's not all about me, because I would have wrecked it all a long time ago; and I'm glad I realized it wasn't all about me, because there's so much to appreciate in a world where God is moving and expressing His concerns through living and creative beings.

And speaking of contests... (Who brought up contests?!) We're **giving away** 10 copies of the new **Violet Burning** album (*Sting Like a Bee and Sing*), so just send an encouraging email to contest@hmmag.com and you'll be entered.

And we're teaming up with **Living Sacrifice** to give away 5 **pairs of concert tickets** (a pair in 5 different markets) on their upcoming tour. You'll be put on the guest list, meet the band and get a shirt (& see a killer show). To enter this one, we're asking you to "pimp" your site with all things LS:

1) **make your profile pic *The Infinite Order* album cover** (find it on my blog – hmmag.com/2009/12/contests);
2) **put the single, "Rules of Engagement," up for streaming on your space** (get it from the LS MySpace page);
3) **email me a photo or screen shot of your MySpace, Facebook or Twitter feed about the LS album.**

And we're also giving away a cool **Sanyo Incognito** SCP-6760 phone. Check out my blog (or facebook.com/HM.Magazine) for entry details on that one.

SPINNING AT HM NOW

HANDEL'S MESSIAH	*Handel's Messiah Rocks*	You'd think this'd suck, but it's good (TSO-like).
SWEET COMFORT	*Cutting Edge, Perfect T...*	Thanks for doing what you do, Retroactive.
THE CRUCIFIED	*The Pillars of Humanity*	Oh, wow! This sounds so good loud!
DESTROY NATE ALLEN	*Perfect Recipe for a Smile*	Fun, quirky raw (yet acoustic) punk rock.
MICHAEL PHILLIPS	*Mirrors Within Mirrors*	Guitar noodling like mad ... but melodic.
DEBTOR	*Deliverance EP*	Another attacking hardcore band on Blood & Ink.
I'M OK YOU'RE OK	*Presents...*	Slick, melodic and radio-ready pop/rock.

REGULAR

Letters 10
Hard news 12
Live report 15
Staff picks 16
Watch to artists 22

FEATURETTE

Gwen stacy 18
Deas vail 20

FEATURE

Before there was rosalyn 24
Fireflight 28
Seabird 30
The crucified poster 32
Living sacrifice 34
Dead by sunrise says 41

INTERMISSION

Outcast bmx team 44
Columns 54

REVIEW

Music 47
Indie pick 52
DVD, book, & gadgets 57

Letters to the Editor

WHAT ZAKK WYLDE SAYS

GREATEST.
INTERVIEW.
EVER.
–Ryan Ro, via internet
PS: Dude, I saw STRYPER. I thought it would be a fun night, but I didn't expect them to be one of the best live bands I've ever seen, hands down. Just wow.

FLYLEAF COVER STORY

I loved the Flyleaf interview in the latest HM. Tomorrow, I'll be sending my subscription renewal for another year of HM and Heaven's Metal. Keep up the good work!
–Kevin Johns, via internet

Ed – Thanks for the encouragement. I'm glad you liked that interview. I had a great time hanging out with the band. They're great people and I could have easily spent the whole day with 'em.

ULTIMATUM ALBUM REVIEW

Hello Doug, I just wanted to say that I thought your metal reviewer of Ultimatum's new disc was way off the mark. I mean that was something I might've written 20 years ago in ignorance... I know different strokes and all, but that was brutal...! Wow....
Blessings, bro,
–Keven Crothers, via internet

Ed – I'm glad we have writers of Dan's caliber writing for HM (Warped Tour thought enough of his writing talent to make him an official beat writer for Warped '05). And I'm glad we have writers who aren't afraid to speak their minds. I try to match albums and styles with appropriate writers, but never try to tell the writer what to think or say. But, oh boy, did we ever get some feedback on what the writer said this time! Calling this band a bunch of "washed up musicians," though, was probably an evaluation that was uncalled for. I'm looking forward to hearing Ultimatum's next album, to see if they channel any of that energy into a ferocious metal sound.

F WORD

Hey, just to let you know, I am a big fan of your magazine and my complaint does not hinder that; but I do have a concern. In previous issues, you have advertised and reviewed the band Miss May I. I looked them up on MySpace and in one of their songs ("Architect") they repeatedly said the F word. I don't condone the use of such profanities and I don't believe that a Christian band would use them. I just think that a Christian magazine shouldn't review bands that may stumble some people spiritually by using profanities, whether Christian or not. Can't wait to read the next issue. God Bless!!!
–Brandon Bennett, Rochester NY

Ed – Thanks for your support, Brandon. With an issue like profanity, you'll see HM address it with sensitivity to our readers – some of which think of cusswords as a definite no-no and others who view their use with more permissiveness. We'll (bleep) out profanity in these pages, but you probably won't see us boycotting any bands that view that issue differently than you do.

BLESSTHECUSSING?

I can't really respect Blessthefall. I love their music itself, but what is the deal with their lyrics? In the recent Blessthefall article (oh, and thanks for the great Flyleaf cover and story!) Lambert acted like it was Craig's fault that kids didn't think they were Christian. Well, ok, I can understand the concern of the premarital sex topic and the going off to Escape the Fate issue, but Craig is not the only reason why kids are asking, "Are you guys still Christians?" When I heard their new song, "To Hell And Back," I was a little shocked. Musically the song is awesome! But lyrically? Screaming, "I'm right here (bleep)!" doesn't exactly sound Christian, either. I also recently saw a girl wearing a Btf shirt with a bleeped-out word. I just don't get Blessthefall, especially if they are trying to be more Christianly without Craig. All I know is that after reading this interview with Lambert, and he not even acknowledging the bleep issue, I just cannot respect them. I wish I could, but I can't. Maybe someone could help me out with understanding this issue? Your reader,
–Melody Seip, via internet

Ed – It's a challenge to be objective as a journalist. I've often decided to give the conclusion to the reader, which I think is probably the best angle to take as a magazine like this. Whenever a person professes Christ, though, I take extra care on how I treat that person – and especially how I might talk about them publicly. I'm not completely opposed to judging, shunning or confronting in a very public way, but man, that's almost a last resort after careful consideration. Grace is an excellent ingredient to add to this "recipe."

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SCRIPTURE "Finally, I prayed to God in heaven, and my mind was healed." (Daniel 4:34)

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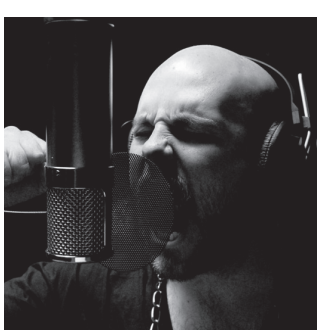
HARDNEWS
Quick & concise

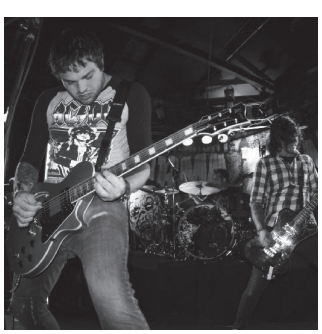
DEMON HUNTER IN STUDIO
RYAN CLARK SHARES THE LATEST

"We've just wrapped up working on our 5th record and it's currently being mixed," reports vocalist Ryan Clark. "We are insanely excited about how it turned out. As cliché as it sounds, it is definitely our most deliberately heavy, punishing release. With that said, I'm certain all current Demon Hunter fans will absolutely love it. We took the formula that we've been doing for the past 7 years and just injected a little more 'Umph!' into it. There are a few more guest vocalists this time that we're really stoked on, and we're now working on all of the fun details like artwork, etc. Tons of stuff on the DH horizon- so keep your eyes and ears OPEN!"

AS I LAY DYING IN STUDIO
WILL THEY TOP AN OCEAN BETWEEN US?

As I Lay Dying is currently holed up with Adam D. and Daniel Castleman at Lambesis Studios in San Diego, CA. They're hard at work recording and writing their follow up to 2007's *An Ocean Between Us*. The band will be recording and writing throughout the rest of 2009. "We started recording the new album a few weeks ago with Adam D & Daniel Castleman at the reigns (and JMR for a couple weeks)," reports Tim Lambesis. The band takes a short break for a couple of shows in Mexico and Sri Lanka. "Sometimes bands need to rush out a crappy record so they can start touring again to pay their bills. In our case, we plan to make a record worth listening to (hopefully), and start touring again when we're done."





Norma Jean sign to Razor & Tie

In the middle of the headlining *Explosions 2009 US tour,* Norma Jean announced that they're playing their breakthrough album *Bless The Martyr and Kiss the Child* in its entirety on select dates. In January they'll head into the studio to record a new album for a 2010 summer release. Cory Brandan of Norma jean comments, "If we didn't sign to Razor & Tie, I think we would have gone on a killing spree, with no regard for life or limb. I think for the first time in our career, upon presenting our ideas, we get to hear the word 'yes' more often. It's like discovering an unknown tribe on a distant island. Except we're the tribe and we don't know your language. Plus we have spears and swords and we're cannibals. Either way, we're insanely animated about R&T showing up and want to try on their Nike Air Jordans." This fun-loving and over-the-top energetic live band has now sold over 360,000 combined.

News bullets

...and speaking of **Norma Jean**, they're holding a contest to encourage fans to videotape them performing one of their new songs, "Kill More Presidents," while they are on their current *Explosions 2009 Tour,* uploading the footage to a microsite after the show. Norma Jean will then create a live music video with all material coming from fan submissions.

While we're on the subject of fan submissions, **Pillar**'s **Rob Beckley** collected various anonymous confessions written on small cards they passed out on their *Confessions Tour* and made a small book out of it, aptly titled *Confessions*. Published by the American Bible Society, the book shares a short devotional, reflection questions and Scripture references for digging deeper. "We decided to give our fans a way to pour out their hearts anonymously, yet before God," says Beckley. "We took thousands of blank confession cards [distributed via a confessional booth] on the road. It definitely brought kids to the point of acknowledging their sin and what was going on." The *Confessions Tour* had a defining impact on Pillar as band members read and prayed over each confession card. Explains Beckley, "More than ever, it put things into a perspective of 'what we do matters.'"

Another new book release is a collection of journals from **Saviour Machine'**s frontman, **Eric Clayton** – *The Collective Journals / 1997 – 2009*.

MxPx are digitally releasing a 14-track Christmas album titled *Punk Rawk Christmas* through their label, Rock City Recording Company. This special holiday offering has been over 10 years in the making; one punk-carol classic released each year (sometimes two) to their PxPx Fan Club for over a decade has now been packaged along with one new original track, "Punk Rawk Christmas" and the soon-to-be-classic punk cover of "Auld Lang Syne."

Ortolan are four young women from Southern New Jersey with music-loving, art-teacher parents, devoted to each other in laughter, bickering, love and play. And now they are the latest addition to the Sounds Familyre clan.

The Crucified played Europe in the fall.

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Wrench In The Works

BY CARLA CARRASCO

The ability to be both dark and positive comes easy to Wrench In The Works. With songs written in the depth of rebellion that describe the struggle between good and evil, that's something we can all relate to, but through the message of the lyrics they're always on the good side. It's an ironic creation that they can pull off.

Wrench In The works is a classic idiom meaning to cause problems in someone's plans. The band says they chose this name because, "We believe the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's way of throwing a wrench in the works of the system of our fallen world."

Being driven by bands like "Neurosis, Living Sacrifice, Tragedy, Mastodon and Converge," it's no wonder that the heavy sound rubbed off on them. Passion flows through everything surrounding the band members. "Everything inspires us, from daily conversations to the color of a sunset," states Andy Nelson, the drummer.

It's important to them to have a positive influence on their listeners. "We actually want to connect with kids and inspire them. Whether it's to inspire them in their faith and walk with God, or just have them leave our show in a better mood," says Andy. Although WITW music is mostly about going through battles, Andy recommends to "Seek the mind of God, whether through prayer, Scripture, fasting, by any means necessary."

When asked what we can expect from their release on the new album, *Decrease/Increase*, due February 2010, the response was: "We wanted to write one of the heaviest, most aggressive records of the year. Right now in the hardcore/metal scene there are a lot of formulated, cookie-cutter heavy bands and we're just bored of it. *Decrease/Increase* is our response to the monotony of these bands, sort of our way of saying you can be brutal, pissed and heavy and not follow the trend."

Between the first record and the one coming up, original guitarist Justin Mehl left the band. New guitarist Greg Thomas joined just in time for the making of the next record. Andy claims that Greg, "...saw the same vision we have for WITW and had a few tricks up his sleeve to help expound on that vision."

If you like the feeling being thrown into a guilt-free mosh pit while giving thanks to God, then check out this work in progress, because they have that edge.

Black Rebel Motorcycle Club is planning on releasing its fifth studio album, *Beat The Devil's Tattoo*, on 3/9/10, signifying the band's first full-length on their own Abstract Dragon, in partnership with Vagrant Records. This album welcomes exciting beginnings, including new drummer Leah Shapiro, as well as their new label, though the trio returned to the familiar setting of Philly to pen this record (where they produced their *Howl* album).

Creed is releasing a live DVD recorded on the *Full Circle* reunion tour.

Atticus Fault is working on a reunion studio album, due out in 2010.

Brian "HEAD" Welch has chosen his bandmates – **Michael Valentine** (bass); **Scott Von Heldt** (guitars); **Ralph Patlan** (guitars); **Brian Ruedy** (keyboards, programming) and **Dan Johnson** (drums). The band toured lightly in 2009; but is ready to hit the road full time in 2010. Currently, HEAD and his band are in Nashville recording their next album with Rob Graves (RED, Pillar).

Soundmass is pleased to announce that **Grave Forsaken**'s 4th album (*Fight to the Death*) is due to hit in early 2010.

Taco Bell made **Haste the Day** one of its 100 bands in the *2009 Feed the Beat*™ lineup, which provides free food and marketing support to America's up-and-coming rock acts.

Athlete will soon release its new album, *Black Swan* (Feb. 2) on Original Signal Recordings in the U.S. "It feels like we're starting again with this record," says lead singer **Joel Pott**. "We made it without any pressure and without really having anything to lose."

Sancrosanct Records just signed Pittsburgh's **Bought in Blood**. With their own mix of hardcore and metal influences ranging from bands like Since The Flood to Dragonforce, Bought In Blood hits their fans with driving riffs, forceful lyrics, and what some fans consider "just the right amount" of punishing breakdowns.

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Page fourteen

HARD MUSIC CABINET
WHAT HM READERS LIKE IN MUSIC TODAY

01 ***Jim Layton***—Here in Eastern Pennsylvania December promises to be a hardcore fan's "Christmas to remember." I merely have to step outside my cave and sniff the air to pick up scent of fresh-baked breakdown. Up North in Allentown I can dine on Underoath, Emery and August Burns Red. This appetizer is quickly followed up with the *California Love Tour* featuring Stick To Your Guns and Sleeping Giant. Finishing up early in December we have the *Napalm Noise Tour* with All That Remains, The Devil Wears Prada and Haste The Day. But that's not all! Turning South toward Lancaster, the hardcore chefs have two great shows on the menu. Norma Jean, Horse The Band and The Chariot team up for holiday cheer followed by a "local homecoming" featuring Amish-influenced August Burns Red, Texas In July and This Or The Apocalypse. Our cup is truly overflowing at this most blessed and festive season.

02 ***Matt Robinette***—"DUDE IT'S THE COPS!" Whenever you hear that in the local bar scene of Indianapolis you might think of it as a not-so-good thing, but no it's not. Instead it has to be one of Indy's newest bands called New Addiction. Led by Adam who sings and plays rhythm guitar, then on lead guitar and backup vocals is Matt, followed by Rodger their thumping bassist, and then power precision drummer extraordinaire Ben. Formed on the friendship of Adam, Matt and Ben they have been hitting up the bar scene since December 2008. Most recently the band competed in a battle of the bands where they were they were voted to be the most entertaining. Earlier this year the band won another battle of the bands where they won the opportunity to have exclusive recording time to produce a record and also as part of the prize they got to open up for Eddie Money. The band blends their unique sound of classic rock all the way through modern rock. New Addiction has a link to their music at myspace.com/comegetaddicted and they will continue to tour throughout the 2010 year.

03 ***Nicholas Sawyer***—Today in modern metal, it seems like hardcore/deathcore are becoming major, more popular genres. Many of the people in my area (Richmond) who are interested in metal wear shirts such as "Suicide Silence," "Parkway Drive," "WhiteChapel," "Abacabb," "As Blood Runs Black," etc. It seems as though people really want to hear something that's "pounding" and "heavy", which the deathcore and hardcore carry much of. Whether it's considered a good or bad thing, people seem to care less about guitar solos and more about breakdowns. I, however, enjoy both. It seems like different genres seem to get along. Recently I attended a Megadeth concert at the National Theater where many of the larger metal acts appear when they come to Central, VA, and the bands that opened were Machine Head and Suicide Silence – both two completely different genres from Megadeth. But wherever metal may stray, I will always like a variety of thrash, hardcore, progressive, and death metal. Thrash, Progressive and Death metal are still big, but hardcore is getting bigger.

04 ***Tim Crews***—I admit it, I am a bit old school and from 1986 onwards was a big fan of Christian Hard Music. Undoubtedly some of it was embarrassing but there was much that was special. One thing that stood out was the passion and intensity, so much so that it still stands up well today. Even in so-called "secular" hardcore. Case in point I have been LOVING The Crucified three-disc re-issue. Great music that is inspiring me anew. Characteristically missing from so much of today's music is that passion, that intensity, yet it's still to be found. Besides The Crucified lately I've been digging new-ish releases by Megadeth, Sleeping Giant, August Burns Red, Project 86, Oh Sleeper, Living Sacrifice, Onward To Olympas, Though He Slay Me, Hands and some others. The passion is out there but it is far too scarce these days. Many bands have riffs but no substance, so I thank any and all who still have heart and will carry the spirit into the music.

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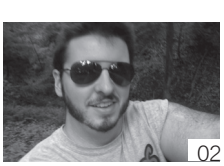
02

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News bullets

Dreampilots released their North American debut album, *Comedown*, to rave reviews, immediately landing on the iTunes "New and Noteworthy" list of current rock genre releases.

As I Lay Dying won a Hollywood Film Festival Award for "Best Music Video" (for As I Lay Dying – "The Sound of Truth" by Brian Thompson).

Soundmass signed Poland's melodic / progressive metal band **Malchus**. "Imagine melding Opeth and Dream Theater," hints the label.

Copeland has announced that they are disbanding. "We have come to an extremely difficult decision. To put your minds at ease, we assure you this is not a bitter break up. We all individually feel Copeland has run its course in our lives and it's time for us to pursue what is next. We couldn't end things without a proper goodbye, so we are planning a final farewell tour in the US this coming Spring, as well as one final jaunt around the world to some of our favorite countries."

Known for its "richly woven musical textures (that) deftly combine electronic beats with live drums and metal-influenced guitars with the warmth of synthesizers," **A Hope For Home** signed with Facedown Records after releasing *The Everlasting Man* on Strike First Records. Look for their new album in April.

Mantric, made up of former **Extol** members, has just signed to Prosthetic Records. "Fusing a unique, distinctly Scandinavian take on rich, challenging metal and punk with a powerful progressive edge," Mantric recorded their upcoming debut in Norway, with studio guru Tue Madsen (Dark Tranquility, The Haunted) handling mixing and mastering duties. Look for it in late February.

Day Of Fire have a new album, *Losing All*, coming out on January 26th

The final concert by **Delirious?** (11/29) was recorded and is going to be broadcast on God TV.

Amber Pacific signed to Victory Records.

LIVE REPORT

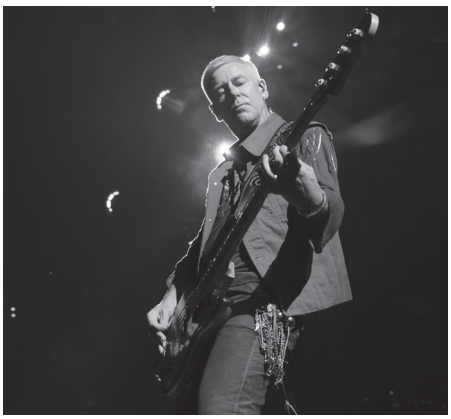
U2

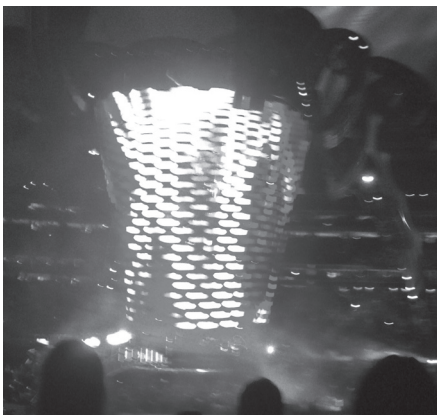
October 14

BY DOUG VAN PELT

(HOUSTON, TX) October 14, 2009. U2's 360 Tour was this fall's hottest ticket in rock — if not the year. It was a pricey event, so it needed to deliver something memorable, that's for sure. The 360-degree in-the-round stage setup and spaceship monstrosity was a spectacle to behold. In between each of the four arms or claws were two sets of several suspended speakers to push the sound throughout the entire stadium. In Houston's Reliant Stadium the retractable roof was open, which probably helped the sound.

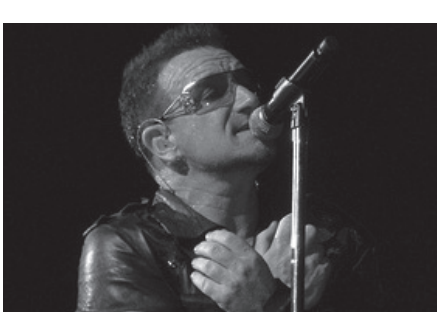
The opening band on this leg of the tour was MUSE, and they delivered an amazing set. Unlike the so-called common practice of "blue-mixing" the opening band with less-than-deserved volume levels, MUSE was shaking the place with its intense modern rock.





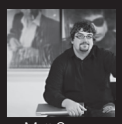
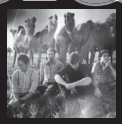
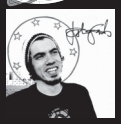
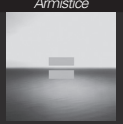
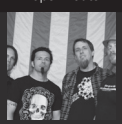
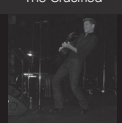
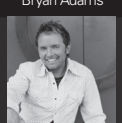
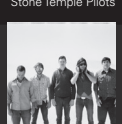
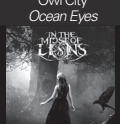
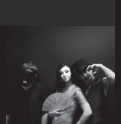
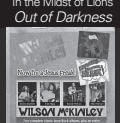
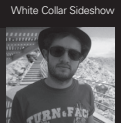
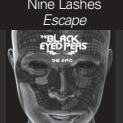
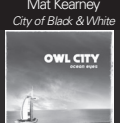
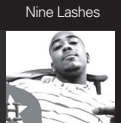
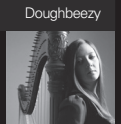
Drummer Larry Mullen strode onstage with a spotlight leading the way as the crowd erupted in cheers. He did a nice solo intro and then the band came on for "Breathe." It was kind of a raw and primal way to start off an arena/stadium show, but it worked. The building percussive crescendo exploded with The Edge's bombastic power chords. Along with several dozen thousands of fans, I was a foot off the ground in musical joy. "Get On Your Boots" kept the show moving along at a brisk pace as the band continued to explore their large musical playground. "Magnificent," with its worshipful lyrics wrapped up the first segment of three brand new songs that started the show. Bono introduced the band to the crowd and declared like an astronaut on his spaceship stage, "Houston, we have no problem." They romped through the groove-heavy and soulful "Mysterious Ways" that gave way to "Beautiful Day." The audience sang all the words to "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For," which seemed to close the deal that audience and band were one on this night. "Until The End Of The World" echoed back to the adventurous middle phase of U2's career and then the video curtain started descending as the band went into the old title track from *The Unforgettable Fire*. The atmospheric sounds of this early collaboration between the band and producers Brian Eno and Daniel Lanois was another high point in a must-see show. The skipping and bouncing guitar notes rang out with trails of reverb as the hexagon-shaped video panels separated from one another until they almost reached the stage. This elliptical cylinder of a video screen spun red and multi-colored lights around and around to great effect. It was a nice touch that reinforced the song's melodic and somber mood.

The lengthy set turned political with "Sunday Bloody Sunday," which Bono introduced with a call out to those listening to their radios in Iran. After "One" the band segued into "Where The Streets Have No Name," which has to be the greatest building crescendo in all of rock. The band said, "Good night," but everyone knew that a few more songs lay ahead. They peaked out with another rarely performed tune, "Ultraviolet," which the band seemed to tip its own hat to in "Get On Your Boots" with the melodic cries of "Baby, baby, baby." U2 finished things off with a spiritual exclamation point, as they traditionally do at the end of a show. Previous tours used "40" or "Yahweh," and this one was capped off with "Moment of Surrender." Quite a memorable show that lived up to its hype and the anticipation of U2 fans everywhere. I think they failed to exceed the height of the musical bar they set with the *Vertigo Tour* a few years prior. Visually, they topped themselves, to be sure; and this one was no musical slouch. I just remember the afterglow of that tour lasting a few days longer than this one. Which is not a bad "problem" to have. I'd still give 'em an "A."



Clockwise from top: Bono and Edge; (photo by Brantly Gutierrez); the video curtain (photo: DVP); U2 (photo: Brantly Gutierrez); Bono (photo: Nathan Malone) ; Adam Clayton (photo: Brantly Gutierrez)

Staff Picks 2009

 Matt Conner *Writer*	MUTEMATH *Armistice*	Falling Up *Fangs*	Switchfoot *Hello Hurricane*	Chevelle *Sci Fi Crimes*	David Crowder Band	 Paper Route	 Josh Garrels
Doug Van Pelt *Editor*	 U2 *No Line on the Horizon*	Austrian Death M...	Maylene & the Sons... *III*	Grave Robber *Be Afraid*	Owl City *Ocean Eyes*	 The Crucified	John Davis
Charlotta Van Pelt *Money*	Train *Save Me, San*	Family Force 5 *Dance Or Die*	Owl City *Ocean Eyes*	The Fray *S/T*	Switchfoot *Hello Hurricane*	 Bryan Adams	Levithepoet
Dan MacIntosh *Writer*	Until June *Sound of Defeat*	Emery *...In Shallow Seas...*	David Crowder Band *Church Music*	Relient K *Forget and Not Slow...*	The Almost *Monster Monster*	 Chris Tomlin	Men As Trees Walking
Chad Olson *Writer*	Believer *Gabriel*	Stavesacre *Against the Silence*	Killswitch Engage *S/T*	Neon Horse *Haunted Horse...*	Project 86 *Picket Fence Cartel*	Stone Temple Pilots	*(no vote ... "I suck...")*
Chris Wighaman *Columnist*	Family Force 5 *Dance or Die*	Celldweller *Wish Upon a Black...*	David Crowder Band *Church Music*	Emery *...In Shallow*	Owl City *Ocean Eyes*	 Emery	
Levi Macallister *MySpace Cowboy*	Sleeping Giant *Sons of Thunder*	Brand New *Daisy*	Manchester Orchestra *Mean Everything...*	The Chariot *Wars and Rumors...*	 In the Midst of Lions *Out of Darkness*	White Collar Sideshow	 White Collar Sideshow
Jamie Rake *Writer*	Various Artists *...Downriver Revival*	Randy Stonehill *Paradise Sky*	Christafari *No Compromise*	Various Artists *Fire in my Bones...*	 Wilson McKinley *Now I'm a Jesus Freak!*	Pet Shop Boys	 Galactus Jack
Jason Irvin *E-News Hound*	Stavesacre *Against the Silence*	Nine Lashes *Escape*	Jars of Clay *The Long Fall Back to...*	Mat Kearney *City of Black & White*	Stars Go Dim *Love Gone Mad*	David Crowder Band	Nine Lashes
David Stagg *Writer*	August Burns Red *Constellations*	 Black Eyed Peas *The E.N.D.*	A Plea For Purging *Depravity*	 Owl City *Ocean Eyes*	LMFAO *Party Rock*	HORSE the Band	 Doughbeezy
Dan Frazier *Writer*	Maylene & the Sons... *III*	As Cities Burn *Hell or High Water*	A Plea For Purging *Depravity*	August Burns Red *Constellations*	He Is Legend *It Hates You*	Andrew Bird	 Timbre

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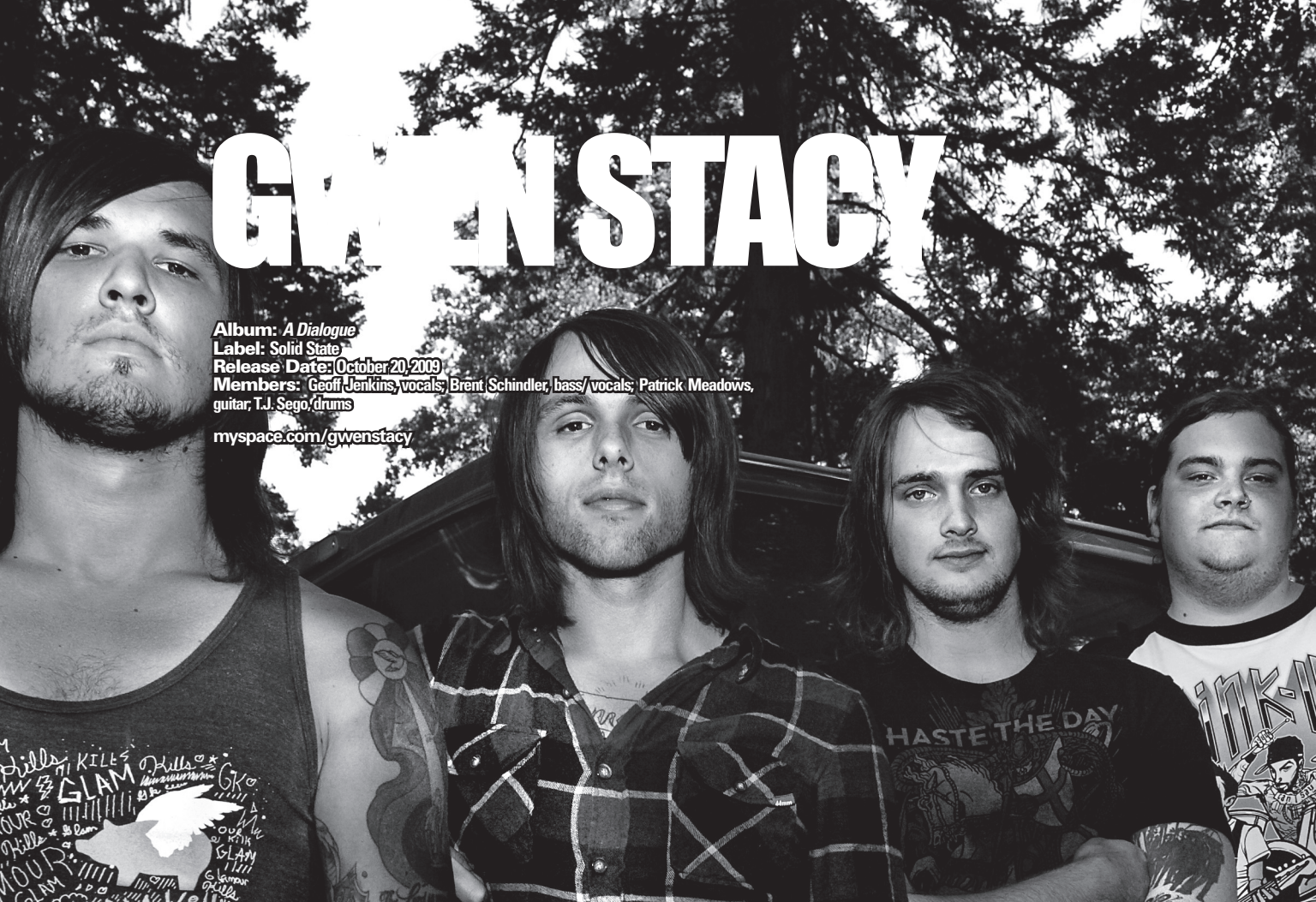
GWEN STACY



Album: *A Dialogue*
Label: Solid State
Release Date: October 20, 2009
Members: Geoff Jenkins, vocals; Brent Schindler, bass/vocals; Patrick Meadows, guitar; T.J. Sego, drums

myspace.com/gwenstacy

"The band started with our first practice on December 4th, 2004," explains bassist Brent Schindler. "We were in Ohio, in our original singer Chris' loft bedroom. We started jamming just for fun. It was really never supposed to be anything more than that. We wrote our first song, 'Haven't Felt Too Well In Awhile,' and the rest is history, I guess."

Being in a band is a funny thing. You start out just like everybody else (local – and no one cares), and in reality, you stay just like everybody else (except extra-local, and some people care) – but everybody else creates this pedestal of untouchables – criticize-able – on a stage. In the limelight. Livin' the rock n' roll dream, baby! I admit, before I knew anything about the business behind all of this, I viewed a band as such, and if you want to know the truth – sometimes I wish I'd stayed on that floor in front of the stage, oblivious. See, there's not a huge amount of honesty in this thang at times, and that can be discouraging – in fact, it has ripped bands and relationships apart.

"Frankly, if we would have given up at the first sign of trouble it would have been a complete waste of our time." How appropriate, then, that Gwen Stacy has founded their climb up the totem pole on honesty? And, not only that – modesty.

"First off, I don't think we're anything special. I love our band and I love the music we play, but we should be proof that if you try hard enough you can make it. I'd like to think it's okay to look up to someone musically and all, but I would rather have people look at us like equals."

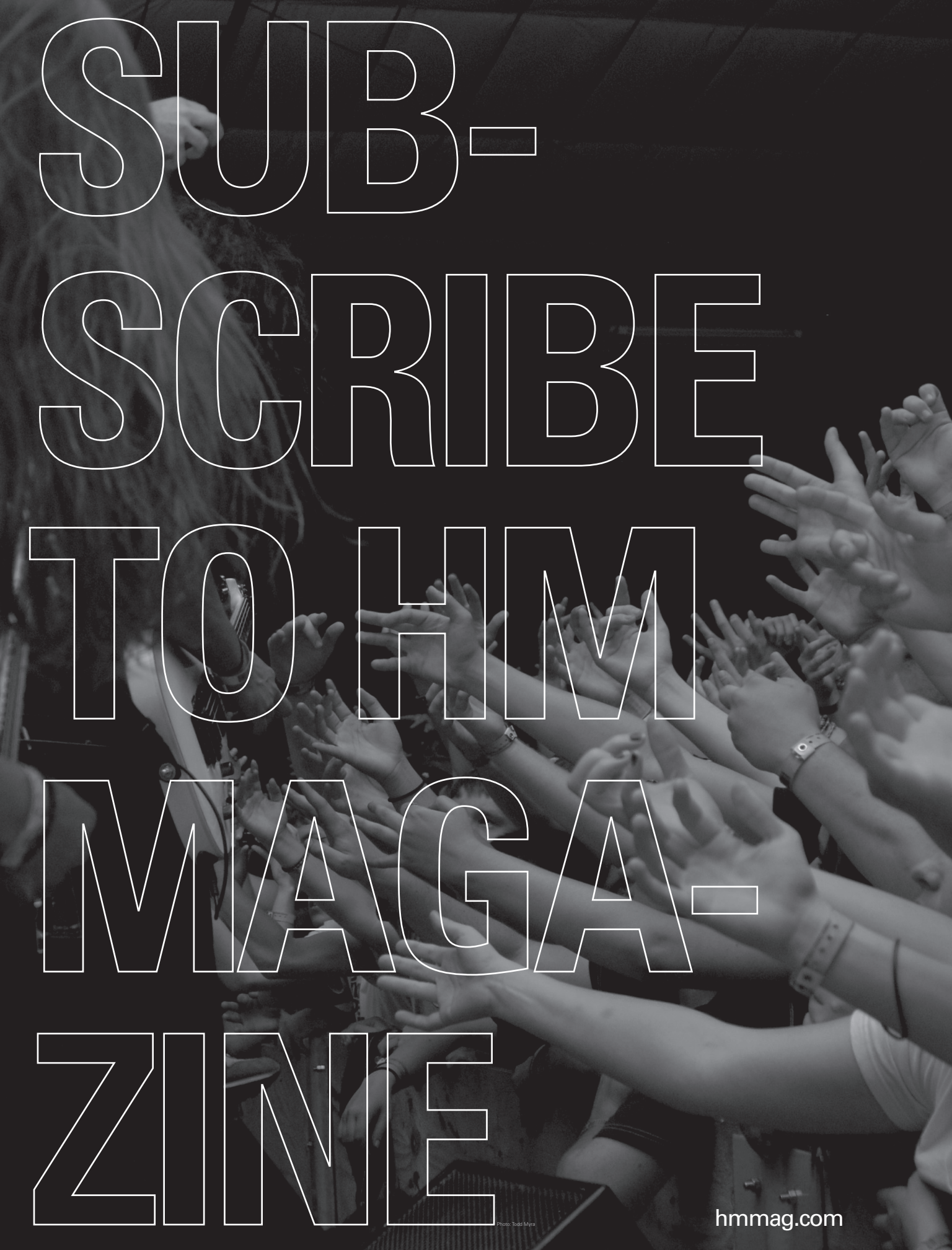
There's something to be said for that humility – for that work ethic – in a band. There's a verse in Psalm 60 that says, "With God's help, we can do mighty things." Gwen Stacy is in a position to do mighty things. Regardless of whether they want the pedestal or not, their position has secured it for them, and opened up the door for many *A Dialogue*. "We're a band that tries to draw on every feeling – from love, to hate, to doubting God and life. We want to be real and lay it all out on the line. Spirituality is a huge part of our band. It's almost like no stone left unturned. We have written about the high points and the very lowest points. The new record encompasses all of that. If you could sit down and have a cup of coffee or a glass of beer with God (whichever you prefer), and pick His brain… That's what our record is about. The feeling of wanting and needing answers to the questions and situations of life.

"We don't think we have everything figured out, therefore, we don't think people should take everything we say to heart. People have brains and should use them to find what is real to them." The public has a ruthless eye at times, and we have quick, pointy fingers. "Sometimes if you say you believe in something, in the public eye, you're often setting yourself up for failure, because you'll get blasted at the first sign of trouble. Kids are harsh at times ... but I guess the opportunity to do it all is worth it most of the time."

So, they're people, and granted, they are people with influence, but aren't we all? This one dude, back in the day, said something pretty insightful about people. He said we should love them. He said that our greatest commandments are to love the Lord, and to love people. "This band is about spreading love in any way people will receive it."

Seems as though these guys are doing their job.

BY LEVI MACALLISTER


SUB-
SCRIBE
TO HM
MAGA-
ZINE
Photo: Todd Myra
hmmag.com

DEAS VAIL

Album: *Birds and Cages*
Label: Mono vs. Stereo
Release Date: October 27, 2009
Members: Wes, vocals; Laura, keys/synth; Andy, guitar; Justin, bass; Kelsey, drums.

myspace.com/deasvail

'The potential is definitely here.' That's what I remember thinking when listening to *All The Houses Look The Same*, the 2007 label debut from Deas Vail. And it was there. The sweeping choruses, the striking musicianship, the mature sensibilities from these young songwriters. But the album never received the proper push it deserved.

"We were really proud of the last release, but we didn't get to do the marketing and touring that we'd hoped to do," says vocalist Wes Blaylock. "There are a lot of business things we had to work out how to get Deas Vail out of our last business deal. It took us a while to get through those steps and we've moved on now."

Enter Mono Vs. Stereo Records. Through a friendship with Relient K's Matt Thiessen, a new label is the order of the day for Deas Vail, giving the Arkansas five-piece a new home for their piano-driven rock. Thiessen resurrected the imprint recently that served as the former label home for House of Heroes and Maylene and the Sons of Disaster among others. Deas Vail now becomes the initial signing with this resurrection.

"We were nervous to sign again," admits Blaylock. "We were very careful. We thought and talked about all of it for a long time. But we wanted to be in a position where it would be really easy for us to put out music regularly and annually. And with the label we already knew the people who were at Mono vs. Stereo. We had a relationship with them. So there wasn't the issue of trust that there would be if we were at some label that we didn't know. So we were fortunate in that regard that we could jump into a label situation with people that we felt that we could trust. Then again, that's true for every band."

It's not that Deas Vail is sitting in their artistic corner waiting for their break. In fact, the music speaks well for itself, garnering a fall tour spot with Mae and an upcoming tour with Owl City. The growing buzz gives a greater platform for their new disc, *Birds and Cages*, to show itself.

"I think for this record our focus was just to continue to do our best as songwriters," says Blaylock. "We all write together. There's not one of us who takes on the writing alone, so it's very much a group effort. That means things change a lot and (we) hold each other accountable.

"We didn't want to create another *All The Houses Look The Same,*" he continues. "The new record is called *Birds and Cages* and I think it's a little more aggressive lately. *The White Lights* EP was recorded at the same time and gives a taste of what people would get from *Birds and Cages*. We didn't repeat any tracks, but that has a teaser of sorts."

Blaylock explains that while *Houses* didn't build the momentum they'd pictured, they hope fans take the time to learn the older songs. In the meantime, they're also perfectly content creating new ones.

"We're just excited to release this next record. I really hope that because it didn't get the attention we feel it deserves, that they will check out our back catalog and learn those former songs. We're not resentful or bitter in any way, though. We're all very happy and hopeful with what we've done and been able to do."

BY MATT CONNER

Circuit Rider

rock & roll missions thailand

Greetings from Chiang Mai, Thailand

My name is Gary Lansdowne. My wife and I are with Youth With A Mission, which is an international, interdenominational Christian missions organization. I have been a volunteer with YWAM since 1991; my wife since 1994. The main emphasis of what we do is Music Outreach and Mercy Services. My wife is also an English teacher.

One of the best forms of communication with the youth is through music. It crosses all language and national differences. There have been so many incredible opportunites to go to places where people would not expect this kind of message. Clubs, bars, prisons, military bases, open-air stages, festivals, etc. In most of the venues we are asked the same question: "Why do you come to a place like this?" The answer is simple: "This is where Jesus would come."

Most people think of a "missions trip" as going to another Country and visiting an orphanage, building a school or church. These are wonderful things to do and we have been part of some of these things. Being a carpenter, painter, plumber, teacher or doctor are incredible gifts that help so many needy, less fortunate people in many countries.

Since 1996, we have helped various Christian rock bands from 14 Countries play in 10 different Nations. Most musicians we have worked with you probably would not know. The best known artists that we have had the privledge of working with is Blindside (Sweden), Andy Hunter (UK) and Disciple (USA).

Thailand is a mostly Buddhist nation with a population of over 65,000,000 people. 70% of this population is age 35 and under. Christians make up 1.65% of the population. The average per capita family income is $8,000 USD.

I am asking you to consider being a part of a Music & Missions outreach. Because of the Internet, MTV and myspace, you can hear the same styles of music played in the Americas, Europe and Asia.

You will not make any money and most people will have no idea of who you are, but you would have an opportunity to touch young people with the love of God.

We are also involved with serving the Burmese refugees on the Thailand/Burma border. One week a month, we travel to Mae Sot and volunteer with a Burmese Migrant School. We have been able to go into the Mae La Refugee Camp which is home to over 48,000 people.

If you are interested in how your band can be involved with a Music & Missions outreach in Thailand, please contact us at: **circuitryderrock@gmail.com**

For other info: **www.myspace.com/circuitryder**
Thailand phone number: 0066-847712831

WATCH TO ARTISTS

My Ticket Home

"Sean and I (Nick Giumenti) have been best friends since second grade and we took guitar lessons from this guy named Bob, who taught at a music store around here. Sean played bass and I played guitar and Bob taught us how to cover songs together. Then one day he was like, 'Hey, your brother plays drums, you three should start a band." So we did, and at first we covered a few songs like the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Wolfmother and stuff. Eventually we tried writing our own songs, which were completely awful at first, but we started getting into more hardcore music, like Killswitch Engage and The Devil Wears Prada. One day I met Johnny Franck in my Spanish class. He was a good friend and had been in a few bands. Then he joined a band called Attack Attack!, and we started liking their music and looking up to them. After a few member changes, Luke and Nick S. (both good friends since elementary school) joined the band. We have just been writing, improving our sound and creating the band we are today."

Thus, the beginning of this Columbus, OH area metallic and melodic hard rock band that's released an EP and sold a lot of singles on iTunes this summer. Expect more ferociously tight abrasive riffs with sing-along-able choruses new songs (produced by Attack Attack!'s Caleb Shomo) any day now.

Public Radio

In discussion with Deep Elm Records' owner, I was promised that Public Radio would be my new favorite band of the year. High expectations to live up to, but they've certainly taken up residence in my head with great hooks, witty lyrics and their own brand of "emotronic" music.

"I've always liked those guys and the records they put out," explains Jeremy Smith, "so I sent a demo over. A couple weeks later I was on their site checking their FAQ about following up on demos and it said they'll contact you if they like your stuff, I go directly from that page to my inbox and I have an email from John at Deep Elm. It just said, 'I'd really like to talk to you,' and had his phone number. We had just done some showcases in L.A. and so we were all in trust-nobody-mode when we met up with him, but he runs a tight ship and he's been around long enough to know what works. He actually had answers to our questions and not just the, 'You guys are gonna be the biggest band ever!!!' hype. So the band met up afterwards and all decided it was a good fit."

With their *Sweet Child* EP in its catalog helping spread the word, Public Radio can focus on what it prides itself on – being a live band. One of the first things you'll notice when seeing PR is the showmanship of its drummer, Luke Hill. "He's a natural rock star and born entertainer," declares Jessie Mathis. "Everyone notices and loves Luke and it's obvious to see what an asset he is to Public Radio. People also pick up on our strong sense of camaraderie. We're not just bandmates, but we genuinely love each other and I think this shows on stage. We're not pretending to have a good time rocking out together, we actually are having a good time."

That's the way to do it.

Saving Grace

This brutal metal band from New Zealand is probably about to make its country very proud. Okay, maybe the political leaders in Auckland won't know them from Adam, but this kiwi export is turning heads and ears across the ocean ... and that is a real good thing. "Not a single one of us ever thought that we would ever get signed", admits guitarist Vasely, "...and have the opportunity to play shows in different countries across the world spreading the Word of God. We have been truly blessed with everything that God has given us and every door that He has opened. Our childhood dreams have come true with Saving Grace". They only wish Dr. Pepper wasn't so hard to come by in their country.

Photo: Chris Fulcher

Dreaming of Eden

"In Palmdale, CA while on tour with Eyes Set To Kill the other month we saw a kid minding his own business get his nose broken by a crazy hardcore dancer. The kid accidentally elbowed him in the face and went down immediately! His nose was at a 90 degree (angle) to his face and there was blood all over the place!"

While this kind of description might bend your advance perception of the band to be of the intense hardcore variety, this Manassas, VA band is a tad more melody-friendly. "I like to call it 'Melodic Hard Rock,'" explains lead vocalist/guitarist, Mike Longhelt. "We like to bridge the gap towards heavier music for those people who are maybe not used to it. We have heavy elements, but never forsaking melody." This is a pretty fair assessment of their tight sound, which is catching on with audiences all over the U.S. "We hope that we can stand out. Often times people try to compare us to other bands, but have trouble doing it, because we don't tend to fit an exact genre and that's how we like it. We want to have the ability to write a super chill epic song and then have the next track be super heavy."

Dreaming Of Eden's second full-length, *Truth In Silence*, is a good example of that musical mixture. It's also underscores the band's attitude of letting their actions speak up first.

"We just want to love people. We are not perfect in any way, but if we can show love, then God is glorified. A lot of 'Christian' music these days is very preachy. We just want to love people and be servants to them the old-fashioned way. My grandma always said, 'In all things preach Christ, if all else fails, use words.' It's amazing to watch people's pride and attitudes break right before your eyes when you love them for no reason."

In the context of a band, this attitude can work wonders when all the people that come into contact with them (from promoters to sound companies to club and venue employees) are glad they did. This could obviously also be a good factor when it comes to their audience and building a fanbase.

Sent By Ravens

You might've already heard the story about how the band got its name. (God sending provision to Elijah via those dirty birds). "It just shows how we're all messed up sometimes, but God still loves us and uses us. We're very open about who we are and what we believe on stage, but we convey the message with love ... not fire and brimstone."

The short history of the band is "...like a weird soup: three parts Southern, two parts Hawaiian, a dash of sarcastic light guy, YouTube, a little luck and lots of faith in God's will."

Zach continues the story... "Jamie and Andy started the band in SC. I was found on the internet and we wrote and played for almost two years ... then found Dane and JJ on YouTube. They wanted to tour, so they flew out and two years later here we are... It's been a crazy few years."

The band recorded its debut full-length in July, with Aaron Sprinkle producing and Matt Carter (Emery) engineering. "We we were all a little intimidated at first, but found out that both of them were sweethearts. They pushed us to pump out some of our favorite stuff to date!"

The band describes its music as: "Passionate, heavier rock with ambient elements (and) very honest lyrics." Zach (the vocalist) adds: "...and we smile a lot on stage, I think." He pauses, laughs, and concludes: "...if that matters to you guys!"

The band plans on touring a lot to promote its music, so having a chance to see them perform should be on the agenda.

[see more of each band's interview at hmmag.com]

BEFORE THERE WAS ROSALYN TAKES A LARGE BITE.

One way of getting noticed in a giant sea, or glut, if you will, of hardcore and metal bands is to tackle a theme that's bigger than the average "boy meets girl" or even "serial killer slashes humans" lyrical motif. For this Houston, TX quintet, that larger-than-life theme was the rise and fall of the Third Reich.

"We developed the concept of *The Fuhrer* over a year before the record even began to be tracked," explains vocalist Carlos Salazar, "and we felt we wanted to say something real and something honest. The record is centered around the philosophy that absolute power corrupts absolutely, and we felt there was nothing else in the 20th century that embodied that more than the atrocity that was World War II. Spiritually speaking, the record is about the human spirit's darkest corners, the places where we are furthest from God, and the thing that we become when we allow ourselves to fall into that. *The Fuhrer* embodies the enemy of truth, which isn't just that ancient serpent we read about in the texts, but also the human heart when it is consumed by its lust for power, greed and any and all of the things that can consume a man."

As any actor that's been cast in an evil role could tell you, attempting to identify with this kind of subject matter can be a pretty bleak and dark exercise. Salazar agrees. "Lyrically and musically, the record is the darkest we have ever written as a band, but the songs are still full of faith, a call to persevere and the hope that we will all find truth that is worth not only dying for, but also living for. In the sense of the record, we are essentially hoping that the emotion and honesty of the songs can come across in a relatable manner."

One potential irony of a concept album like this would be the criticism that Christian rock or metal can be, in and of itself, propaganda, which is something any study of the Nazi party would probably cover. This might especially be a point of contention aimed at a "ministry band" like Before There Was Rosalyn. Salazar isn't afraid to address the issue, nor do he and his bandmates try to warp someone else's view of reality to conform to their own.

"I think that anyone who feels empowered to spread a message will undoubtedly pursue that end by whatever means are available to them. Mark Twain once wrote that a thing is not necessarily true because a man dies for it, and certainly throughout history and even in current events we see those who are willing to lay their lives down for social, religious and even political causes that may or may not hold any ground with us, but ultimately we have to believe that the difference is that love is a timeless cause. We preach Christ, and Christ is love, and perhaps we would see the magnificence of the breakdown of all those social, religious and political injustices if we embraced the Gospel and truly loved each other and sought to meet one another's needs before our own. Some might say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one.

"We understand that not everyone who comes to our shows believes what we believe, and we respect that. We talk to everyone and anyone who strikes up a conversation with us about anything, and we believe that being a ministry before being a band doesn't just mean that we want to talk to you about our beliefs, but that we are genuinely interested in meeting your needs. There are kids who find more hope and friendship in their scenes than they do at home or in their personal lives, and we want to be there for those new friends when we meet them at shows and talk to them about the things that maybe no one else is listening to. So often, all these kids are looking for is someone to listen to what they have to say, and if we can be that, even if for just 15 minutes at a show, then we would love to. We want to share the message of our Lord and His rejuvenating mercies because it has transformed our entire worlds, but ministry doesn't stop there. We want to let these kids know that whatever is happening in their lives, or whatever their thoughts are on anything, they are just as valuable as the next person. Someone, somewhere extended a hand to us when we felt no one would, and if we can be that for someone else, it's much more than a pleasure."

To start with such dark material and end up in such a bright space is quite an accomplishment – and then there's the precision-like metal these guys coax out of their instruments with each track. Fortunately, the energy of the songs on the album translate well in a live setting, which is not without purpose. "I think everyone's opinions differ on what a good show might be. Some people might measure it solely on how tightly a set was played or how many kids were present at the show; and, while those things are definitely important to us, we tend to really focus on the energy in the room while we play. I think it's a defining thing for us if it feels like the kids watching are genuinely interested in the performance, and we tend to play with our hearts on our sleeves, so as long as we can walk away from a show, or finish a song knowing that we played it with the same passion as when it was written, then we can walk away satisfied from that."

It's because of that kind of attitude that the feeling is usually mutual at the end of a Before There Was Rosalyn show.

✖

by doug van pelt

Photo: Robert Chamorro

Conspiracy of Thought

Album: *Nothing More Than Light* | **Label**: Youngside Records | **Release Date**: 2009 | **Home**: Riverside, CA
Members: Ben Stewart – Lead Vocals, Guitar, Keyboard | Devanand Bassanoo – Lead Guitar, Keyboard, BGV | Michael Parshall – Bass, Vocals | Tony Vasquez – Drums, Electronic Percussion, Sequencing
RIYL: "People who like System of a Down, Nine Inch Nails, U2, Korn, AFI, and Rage Against The Machine would be interested in Conspiracy of Thought. I know it's eclectic, but so are we."
If we had the chance to play for most of the televised world and play just one song, it'd be: "If it were a Conspiracy Of Thought song, we would perform 'Nothing More Than Light.' It connects with people in so many ways. For the urban-isolationist it can be a connection to others that are surrounded by people and yet feeling so alone. For the seekers it can be a guide to where truth can be sought. For the spiritual it can be a story of transcendence from the material world. But for the Jesus follower it is all of our stories rolled into one. The human animal is a thirsty creature longing to fill its empty soul with sacrificial, unconditional and radiant love."
Lil'-known secret: "Well, I'm not going to lie. I make a powerfully mean vegetable lasagna. One bite of that and it's like 'Here comes the stardom.' And don't get me started on homemade ice cream, fresh salsa or humus."
Memorable show: "Leading 20,000 people, in the middle of Hollywood Blvd during an anti-war rally, in singing the words from our song, 'Jihad': 'Why can't we walk hand in hand. Put an end to all the hate that now destroys our broken land.' We were clapping, singing, and embracing one another. I realized that – Christian event or not – we were worshipping God. The fields are in the streets, and ripe for the harvest."

ROCK AND ROLL TOWN HALL

AwakenUs

Album: *Reveal* | **Release Date**: December 1, 2009 | **Home**: Overland Park, KS
Members: Wayne Huston – Bass, Vocals | Penny Lindemann – Smith: Vocals | Steve Kuker – Drums, Vocals | Stan Sword – Guitar, Vocals | Holly Huston – Guitar, Vocals | G.P. Robinett – Sax, Guitar, Vocals | Tony Bockelman – Guitar | Doris Vorndran – Vocals | Jerry Wilke – Keyboards, Vocals
RIYL: Evanescence, Red, David Crowder, Chris Tomlin
Albums we'd give @ Christmas: "RED's *Innocence and Instinct*," shares Holly. "It is just flat-out a great CD both musically and lyrically. Love the struggle theme. It's something we all deal with." Tony adds: "Ray Stevens' *Crackin' Up*. How can you go wrong with Ray Stevens and songs like 'I'm My Own Grandpa' and 'Would Jesus Wear a Rolex?'" Steve adds: "Chris Tomlin – *Glory in the Highest: Christmas Songs of Worship*. He is clearly my favorite Christian artist, hands down! He is true, authentic, writes inspired and incredible music. I just can't say enough good things about him!"
One conviction: "Everyone deserves to be loved," states Holly, "especially those that don't 'fit' into our mainstream world." Jerry: "We need to be willing to let go of everything that was true about us yesterday so God can show us who we are today." Tony says: "God has put us here to do His work, not to look out for ourselves." And Wayne adds: "Love God no matter what, love others no matter what."

The Beckoning

RIYL: Amorphis, Dark Tranquility, HIM | **Members**: Roy – Lead Vocals, Drums | Meg – Clean Vocals, Keys
Without these Albums...: "Saviour Machine (*Legend* series), Virgin Black (*Sombre Romantic*), Antestor (*Return of the Black Death*)."
History: "Meg and Roy both come from very different musical backgrounds. Meg has sung her whole life, but got into playing keyboards after hearing Virgin Black's *Sombre Romantic* album. Roy comes from a metal and hardcore background, but Antestor's *Return of the Black Death* album completely turned me around musically and after that all I wanted to hear and play was symphonic metal, so being married, it was a natural progression for us to do this kind of music together."
If it wasn't for music, I'd be doing: "Roy and Meg would both probably be teaching martial arts."
One Question for God: "We ask him lots. We think we all need to listen more."
If a super surgeon removed all of your emotions and the ability to feel any emotion for the rest of your life, which one or ones would you most want to have back? Why? "Both sorrow and joy. Both of these are necessary for Christian maturity and they also are great inspiration for songwriting."
If we had the chance to play for most of the televised world and play just one song, it'd be: "'An Omen in the Dark,' because we feel it best represents the many different components that make up our sound."

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FIREFLIGHT

WEARY, WAITING AND DESPERATE

Replete with plenty of giant rock anthems, Fireflight's new disc seems poised to stoke the career conflagration ignited by *Unbreakable*. Even the title and lead track of the new record sound epic: *For Those Who Wait*. But when I ask front woman Dawn Richardson and guitarist/secondary vocalist Justin Cox what they're waiting for, "epic" is not the word that came to mind.

Try "exhausted."

"I'm waiting on Christmas," Justin says hopefully, "for vacation."

Dawn laughs out loud and rasps, "Yeah, I'm waiting for the tour to wrap up, so we can have a couple of days off. We're tired!"

Prepping for this last stop on the current tour in Lake Jackson, TX (near Houston), this hardworking band is winding up what is only the most recent onslaught of furious activity since the 2008 release of *Unbreakable*. Calling it "a little surprise hit for us," Justin admits its importance to the band. "Basically, if we had not holed up in a church … and written *Unbreakable* kind of at the last minute, I don't think you'd have a Fireflight to interview right now."

Hard to imagine for a band with this much mainstream visibility, yet waiting and holding on to hope is experiential truth for Fireflight, besides being the overriding theme of the new project. Dawn speaks of a time of waiting, marked for her by discouragement and distraction, before Fireflight was ever signed.

The future seemed very unclear, "But at one point God just spoke to me and He told me and said, 'Now, everything that you ever do successfully, it's never been about your skill. It's never been about you getting it right. It's always been about My Spirit. It's always been about Me working through you. And you're not up there to entertain these people. You're there to communicate My love, and that's always going to be My power working that through you.'"

A spiritual breakthrough integral to Fireflight's subsequent signing and success, Richardson acknowledges the universality of waiting. When asked who "those who wait" are, she responds confidently, "I think we all are. There isn't anybody I know that hasn't had to go through a time in their life where they were waiting, waiting on God to either come through or to just show them where they were going."

What's more, the title cut encourages the listener to, "know there is a purpose for those who wait." What is that purpose? "It's just become my personal conviction," says Dawn, "that when we have a time of waiting, I think that God is trying to teach us something. And we may not be able to move on from that time of waiting until we've learned it."

And what has Fireflight, the band, been learning? According to Dawn, "What we're learning is that the most important thing is love – loving each other and loving the people we are there to minister to."

"Just to add to that," says Justin, "something that actually our bus driver told us yesterday... He said, 'I've learned that I don't know how to love 'til I can love the people that are hard to love.'"

Asked to broaden the discussion from the purpose of waiting to the purpose of Fireflight as a band, Justin speaks up, "I think our purpose is really just to allow God to move in us where He wants us to move. We all know we've been called to be in this band and play music and write songs and encourage people and help people."

For Those Who Wait won't come as a surprise to any who have heard Fireflight before, but these ears hear better pacing and variety between tracks, less reliance on orchestration, and a few new twists. Listeners will make their own determination about how well Fireflight is fulfilling their calling to write songs and make music, but it's obvious that Dawn and Justin feel good about recent efforts. Their second recording experience with producer Rob Hawkins (whose résumé includes everything from country rock to artsy indie rock to tween pop), there's no hiding what Justin thinks of working with him.

BY CAREY WOMACK

"Oh, man, I love that dude! He is the best person in the universe to work with, as far as I'm concerned." Justin tells me that in between Fireflight projects, Rob had produced a hardcore band (I ask who and he says, "Write this down." I pause, waiting for what I'm supposed to write, and everybody laughs. "Write This Down. That was the name," and everybody laughs again.). Cox talks about Rob playing it for them. "Their CD sounds incredible! And I told him, 'I want some of that!'"

Previously the band recorded with Hawkins in a rented studio, but this time "we actually did a lot of the work at his home studio, which is new," Justin says, adding, "he's got a really good feel … he knows what his room sounds like, so he knows how to make things sound awesome."

Justin also tells me about a couple of new piano ballads the band believes will broaden their audience, specifically mentioning the track "Name." I tell them I especially dug the transparent grittiness of the lyrics, which paints pictures of two hard realities in a hospital. Dawn offers humble thanks and murmurs, "Well, it broke my heart to write it."

"Yeah, we're all sitting around crying while we're writing it," Justin says, and we all crack up over the phone.

Dawn goes on to tell us that "it's actually about a couple of people that we have met, one on the road and one at home… And it honestly broke our hearts, so we feel that a lot of people are going to be able to connect on a very deep level with that song." I agree, though I don't say that I personally favor the haunting closing track, "Recovery Begins."

We discuss why the title track, perhaps most reminiscent of the vibe of *Unbreakable*, isn't the first single. Dawn says that when another song (catchy as all get-out, and evoking the classic '80s and '90s rock and metal that have influenced the band) turned out exceptionally strong, "I think that we just decided instead of busting out the game with the title track, let's just kind of keep the champion in the corner." They decided to go with "Desperate" first, she says, giggling with enthusiasm, "'cause it's just, like, really hot!"

Before we wrap the interview, I ask if they have any last things to add. Dawn says, "Just that we hope to see the readers at the shows." Asked what their goals are when headlining a show, Justin joshes, "I think my personal goal is not to pass out or to become so dehydrated from sweating, 'cause I sweat a lot." As our laughter dies down, he grows serious. "We want people to feel … these songs are not just music and words. They're stories and messages that we care about them, and there's power behind the words. We want God to be seen in our work, not just a bunch of us, you know? We don't want people just to see Justin, Dawn, Glenn, Wendy and Steve. We want people to see God."

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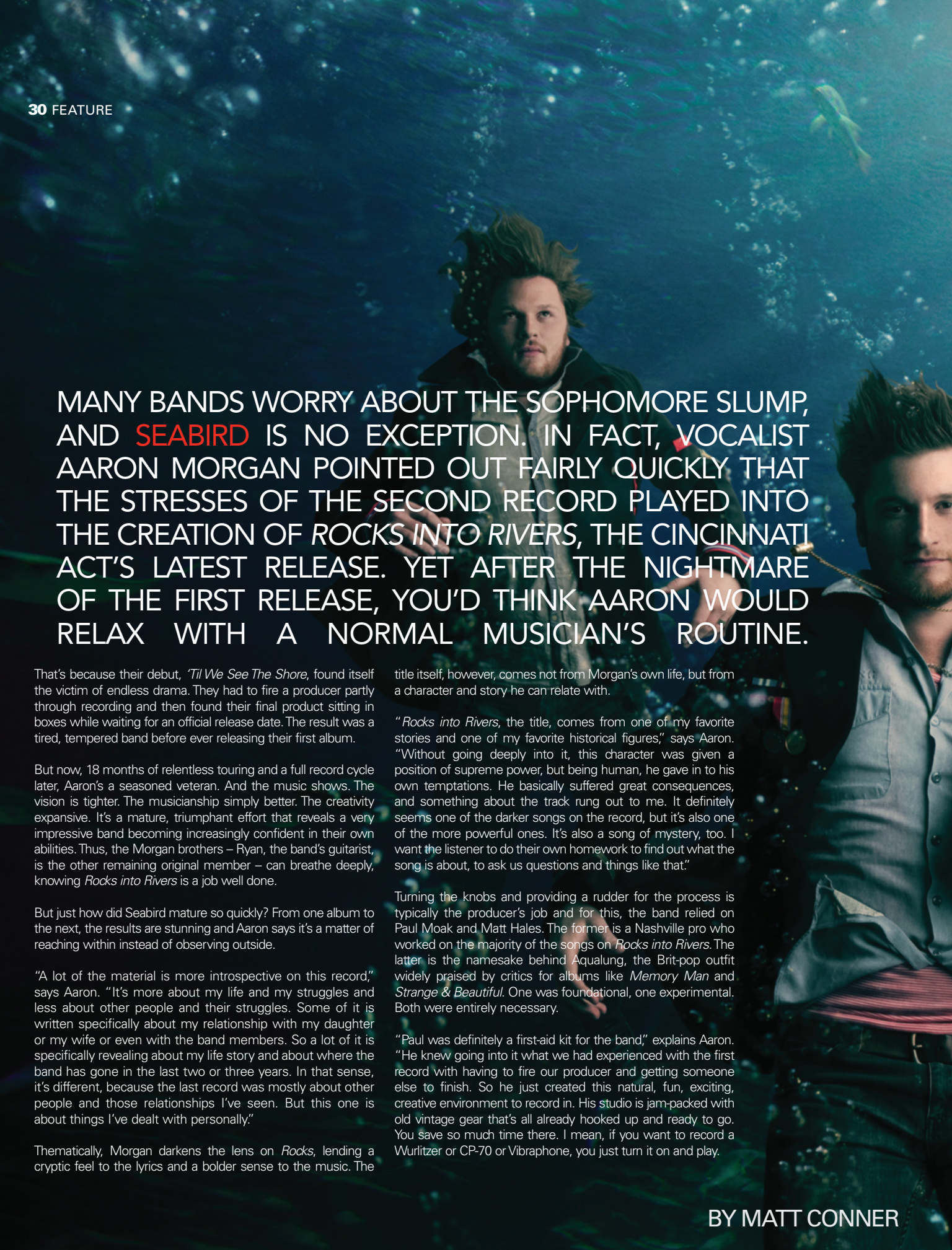

MANY BANDS WORRY ABOUT THE SOPHOMORE SLUMP, AND SEABIRD IS NO EXCEPTION. IN FACT, VOCALIST AARON MORGAN POINTED OUT FAIRLY QUICKLY THAT THE STRESSES OF THE SECOND RECORD PLAYED INTO THE CREATION OF *ROCKS INTO RIVERS*, THE CINCINNATI ACT'S LATEST RELEASE. YET AFTER THE NIGHTMARE OF THE FIRST RELEASE, YOU'D THINK AARON WOULD RELAX WITH A NORMAL MUSICIAN'S ROUTINE.

That's because their debut, *'Til We See The Shore*, found itself the victim of endless drama. They had to fire a producer partly through recording and then found their final product sitting in boxes while waiting for an official release date. The result was a tired, tempered band before ever releasing their first album.

But now, 18 months of relentless touring and a full record cycle later, Aaron's a seasoned veteran. And the music shows. The vision is tighter. The musicianship simply better. The creativity expansive. It's a mature, triumphant effort that reveals a very impressive band becoming increasingly confident in their own abilities. Thus, the Morgan brothers – Ryan, the band's guitarist, is the other remaining original member – can breathe deeply, knowing *Rocks into Rivers* is a job well done.

But just how did Seabird mature so quickly? From one album to the next, the results are stunning and Aaron says it's a matter of reaching within instead of observing outside.

"A lot of the material is more introspective on this record," says Aaron. "It's more about my life and my struggles and less about other people and their struggles. Some of it is written specifically about my relationship with my daughter or my wife or even with the band members. So a lot of it is specifically revealing about my life story and about where the band has gone in the last two or three years. In that sense, it's different, because the last record was mostly about other people and those relationships I've seen. But this one is about things I've dealt with personally."

Thematically, Morgan darkens the lens on *Rocks*, lending a cryptic feel to the lyrics and a bolder sense to the music. The title itself, however, comes not from Morgan's own life, but from a character and story he can relate with.

"*Rocks into Rivers*, the title, comes from one of my favorite stories and one of my favorite historical figures," says Aaron. "Without going deeply into it, this character was given a position of supreme power, but being human, he gave in to his own temptations. He basically suffered great consequences, and something about the track rung out to me. It definitely seems one of the darker songs on the record, but it's also one of the more powerful ones. It's also a song of mystery, too. I want the listener to do their own homework to find out what the song is about, to ask us questions and things like that."

Turning the knobs and providing a rudder for the process is typically the producer's job and for this, the band relied on Paul Moak and Matt Hales. The former is a Nashville pro who worked on the majority of the songs on *Rocks into Rivers*. The latter is the namesake behind Aqualung, the Brit-pop outfit widely praised by critics for albums like *Memory Man* and *Strange & Beautiful*. One was foundational, one experimental. Both were entirely necessary.

"Paul was definitely a first-aid kit for the band," explains Aaron. "He knew going into it what we had experienced with the first record with having to fire our producer and getting someone else to finish. So he just created this natural, fun, exciting, creative environment to record in. His studio is jam-packed with old vintage gear that's all already hooked up and ready to go. You save so much time there. I mean, if you want to record a Wurlitzer or CP-70 or Vibraphone, you just turn it on and play.

BY MATT CONNER

"He's also a genuine lover of music and good performer as well," he continues. "He's great at guitar and great on piano, so the guitar tones we got out of his studio were fantastic. He spent so much time crafting the tones with Ryan and he loved it. He was in guitar heaven. So that's what we got from Paul was this complete confidence. He was so confident in our songs that we could capture something great."

Moak, who's also produced Mat Kearney, Martha Wainwright and Leeland among others, agrees with Aaron regarding the band's needs. And he says it was a journey that ultimately met its goal.

"Working with Seabird was amazing in the fact that they were yearning for a creative, fun and intense process when it came to making the record," notes Moak. "They wanted to pursue new sounds with guitars and keys, and they didn't want to rest on any formulas learned from their first record. For me to travel down this road with them was an experience I will take with me for a long time."

As for Hales, Aaron says the band knew what they were getting into when they first asked him to consider working with them two years ago. Aqualung's electronic layers and multi-instrumental approach led to some creative bursts in the studio with Seabird that brings a new depth to *Rocks*.

"I'd been a huge Aqualung fan for a long, long time," explains Aaron. "We'd gotten a chance to meet him a couple times over the last two years, I just put the bug in his ear like, 'Hey, if you'd ever be interested in producing...' So when he finally agreed to do it, he spent a lot of time with demos that I'd recorded. He'd put his spin on it and prepare this stuff for us for that were full of his ideas. And that's really what I wanted. It doesn't sound like Aqualung necessarily, but it's definitely from the mind of Matt."

If there's one descriptor that applies more than any other, perhaps the word "victorious" best fits *Rocks into Rivers*. For the band, it's a sign they're here for good, conquering any early label or career woes and any signs of a sophomore slump.

✖

GREG MINIER – THE CRUCIFIED

Cindy Willasenor for I.H.S. Photos

YOU DON'T TUG ON SUPERMAN'S CAPE.
YOU DON'T SPIT INTO THE WIND.
YOU DON'T PULL THE MASK OFF THE OLD LO
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LIVING SACRI

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BY DOUG VAN PELT

Photo: Keaton Andrew

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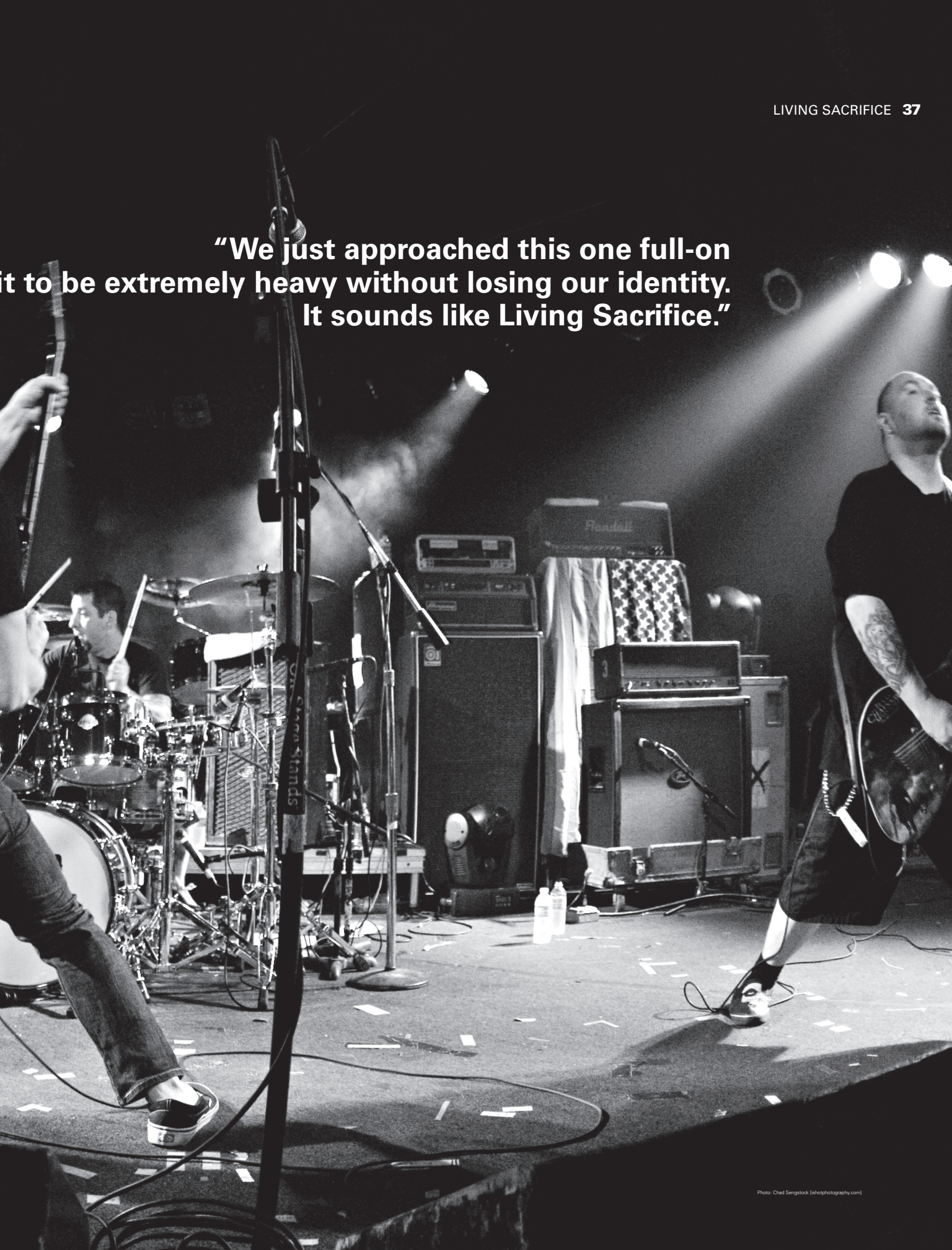

**“We just approached this one full-on
it to be extremely heavy without losing our identity.
It sounds like Living Sacrifice.”**

Photo: Chad Sengstock (ishotphotography.com)

Living Sacrifice is one of those bands that runs its business like a machine – with a ruthless efficiency that matches its punishing riffs and pulverizing beats. You'll fail to turn up a publicity photo with the band smiling at the camera. Every detail, it seems, gives testament to the seriousness of their task. While the Blues Brothers' claim to be "on a mission from God" is hardly conveyed without a tongue bulging out the side of John Belushi's cheek, it wouldn't be hard to believe that this thrash metal band from Little Rock, Arkansas is actually on some sort of no-nonsense, take-no-prisoners thrash metal mission from God.

"Fans of the band have come to expect a certain level of performance from us and we do not want to let them or ourselves down," explains guitarist/vocalist Bruce Fitzhugh. "I think our expectations for ourselves and our band are high, and so that translates to our music. A by-product of that is having the respect from our musical peers in other bands and fans of the band."

Living Sacrifice had consistently brought excellence and heaviness to a scene for the better part of a decade-and-a-half, which started with a demo cassette in 1989 and ended as they dissolved as a working band sometime around 2003 (depending upon which version you hear, though they did record a few songs for their swan song best-of, *In Memoriam*, released in 2005). They successfully built a solid reputation and have indeed earned respect from their musical peers. So, it was an unexpected announcement that brought joy to all those that remember their dominating metal music when the band announced that they were officially reuniting in 2008. It took awhile to get the legal details hammered out, but the band was able to record a couple tunes ("Death Machine" and "The Battle") to serve up something new for their summer 2008 tour with Demon Hunter.

Now, at long last, a new full-length album (titled *The Infinite Order*) has been recorded and is poised for release on January 26. The results are fantastic, but the wondrous occasion also leaves the happy but curious Living Sacrifice fan with lots of questions.

Why did you guys come out of retirement and put the band back together?
"Well, at that time," explains Fitzhugh, "we felt like we could devote the time to Living Sacrifice properly. And I felt like there was not much out there in the market anymore for the style of metal that we play. All the newer bands are definitely influenced by bands that were not even around in the '90s, much less '80s metal and thrash. This was just before 2008."

Tell us about how the "recruitment process" went for you guys as you were re-forming...
"I set up a meeting with them in Little Rock," answers Fitzhugh, "and drove to meet with them to see if we were all really into it. We met and everyone was on the same page, so we committed to it. And then we ate our Mexican food."

Sometimes veterans of rock can have a sour mindset, which can lead to bitterness at worst and at least a sense of jadedness… How does a guy that's "been around the block" muster the motivation to go out there again?
"I just have fun playing with these dudes and making music," replies Fitzhugh matter-of-factly. "That is my motivation. It is still work, though."

"Yeah," adds drummer Lance Garvin, "going out with your best friends and playing metal isn't that bad. What is everybody crying about? I've had worse jobs."

Tell us about the process of writing and recording *The Infinite Order*.
"Well, for this record," begins Fitzhugh, "because we were all in different places geographically, we started with mp3s of ideas. Lance started the process by sending me and Rocky (Gray, guitarist) a bunch of ideas he had been working on. Usually a couple of riffs that would make a good starting place for a main musical theme. I or Rocky would come up with other parts that fit. Once we had about 20 ideas, we met in Little Rock at Lance's house and started putting everything together. Usually, when we all get in a room together, lots of other ideas start to come and we end up writing something completely new together. The song we did the video for, 'Rules of Engagement,' came about that way. It is one of my favorites on the record, for sure. Just us sitting in a room with Pro Tools and all of us messing with different riffs. After we have the song structures pretty solid, I will start writing lyrics. Arthur (Green, bassist) writes lyrics as well, and contributed some great ideas for this record. For the production, we tapped Jeremiah Scott, who I had worked with on the first Showdown record (*A Chorus of Obliteration*) and he had recorded the three new songs that we did for *In Memoriam*. He also recorded 'Death Machine' and 'The Battle' (Steve Blackmon mixed these). So, we were really comfortable with him and he has a good ear and knows what we need. During the tracking, we found out that Andy Sneap had agreed to mix it. He just had to finish the new Megadeth record… that's all (he laughs). We were stoked, to say the least!"

In your opinion, how does *The Infinite Order* fit in the evolution of Living Sacrifice's sound? And, a fan asked, How do you plan to top *Reborn*, *The Hammering Process* and *Conceived In Fire*?
"I think the new record is a natural progression from *THP* and *Conceived*," continues Fitzhugh, "but much faster and thrashier. There is a lot of things on here that just remind me of the style of metal and thrash that we grew up with from the '80s. It was not a conscious thing, but just sort of came about as we were putting the songs together and working the riffs with different drum beats to make the songs more dynamic. As for topping any of our last records, I could never say. We just approached this one full-on and knew we wanted it to be extremely heavy without losing our identity. It sounds like Living Sacrifice."

Why was it important for you to return to some thrashier roots for you guys? What is it about this genre/style that feels "timeless" for you (as opposed to a genre that's more steeped into an era, like rap-rock or hair metal)?
"I don't know," admits Fitzhugh, "there has always been elements of thrash in our music. It was not conscious, it is just how it turned out. We just wrote songs and picked the ones that we liked the best. There are about five songs that did not make the record."

The song "Love Forgives" is a bit more straight-forward and melodic – rhythmically and riff-wise. What are your thoughts about the style on that one?
"It just came out as a more straight-forward, heavy tune," states Fitzhugh. "Lance wrote the main riff. It is melodic and I thought it made a good break or dynamic against the other tunes on the record. I like how it came out. Going into writing the record we did not want to limit ourselves."

The last time we had a full-length album from you guys was 2002's *Conceived In Fire,* which featured Matthew Putnam on percussion and gave the band's metallic sound a real tribal vibe, not too unlike Sepultura. This was a cool evolution of sound from the days of *Reborn*. What led to leaving behind the vibe that extra percussion brought? How much thought went into that decision? What were the factors?
"Well, there is percussion on *The Infinite Order*," explains Fitzhugh, "played by Lance on many of the songs, so it is still very much a part of the sound. As for having percussion live, it just is not economical at this time. Maybe in the future we will take someone out, but I feel like the songs stand on their own with or without percussion. Live it is a great visual element and also adds a bit of chaos, which I like."

How do y'all think *THP* and *CIF* songs will sound live minus the percussionist?
"The songs are just as powerful now," describes Fitzhugh. "Lance fills in a lot of what the percussion does, whereas when we had the perc, he we would play less and let the perc fill everything in."

"And I grew two more arms," Garvin jokes.

What are your practical plans and goals for this incarnation of Living Sacrifice? What kind of challenges do these goals present (if any) in competition with your full-time jobs, etc?
"We just want to play as much as we can," offers Fitzhugh. "We do have other jobs and obligations. Rocky is also in We Are the Fallen. Lance is playing with some other bands on tour, I have a merch company called Zambooie. Arthur also works with a merch company and a retail store with his wife in Ft. Smith, AR. And we all have families with kids. So, we are all really busy. That said, we are going to do what we can to play out and do some festivals and limited touring."

Living Sacrifice has pretty much been known as a band to take their spirituality/faith seriously – both in their lyrics and how they handle themselves as a band. I have two questions related to this: If you were given a platform or some measure of respect from the younger bands around you, what would you tell them to encourage, rebuke, train or educate them?
"I would say just be true to your self and your gifts musically and spiritually," says Fitzhugh. "There is just no need to put on pretense in this day. Every band is different and has a different idea of how to present themselves. Just don't be hypocritical. There are plenty of those in all aspects of life."

What has your time off from the band taught you that, perhaps, you're bringing to the band with you this time?
"That our families are more important than music could ever be," fires Garvin, in his first opportunity to beat Fitzhugh to an answer.

"Yes, definitely," agrees Fitzhugh. "Approaching the band this way helps us keep perspective."

What are some of the strengths of each member of the band? And how do they help make Living Sacrifice what it is?
"Hmmm," ponders Fitzhugh. "Well, let's see... Lance is a main writer and is integral to the sound of Living Sacrifice. Not just his drumming, though he definitely has a distinct style that I think is very tasteful and not overdone. For example, a song that has double bass through the whole thing can get boring. He comes up with interesting beats that are not always your typical 'metal' drum part.

"Rocky is a master of all things metal. He lives and breathes metal and is a prolific writer. And Rocky is the nicest guy you would ever meet or know.

"Arthur is the enthusiast and social networker. He knows everyone and that helps to have a dude like that in the band. He is always positive and keeps good spiritual perspective.

"I am not so sure I can evaluate myself on this," he laughs.

"I can," interjects Garvin. "Without Bruce, none of this would probably happen. He deals with the business side of things, which no one likes to do. He has a great talent for it, as well as writing lyrics and riffs."

Is there a subject you'd like to bring up?
"Yeah," quips Garvin. "Double-bass drums. So, now it's cool to play two kicks?"

[We opened up the floor on the facebook.com/HM.Magazine page to see if anyone had questions for the band. Here's a few]:

Who would Bruce Fitzhugh like to fight in the octagon?
"I already fought Ryan Clark of Demon Hunter," answers Fitzhugh. "Search that vid on YouTube. I think he won!" he laughs.

Is it even in the realm of possibility that you guys could record another thrash album for us older fans?
"We just did," answers Garvin patiently.

What does it feel like for Lance and Bruce for it to be almost 20 years since they started doing LS?
"Very fortunate to have come this far and still have fans," admits Garvin.

As veterans of this industry, How do you feel about negativity and competition between bands from your experience in the past and now?
"Grow up," replies Garvin. "It will lead you nowhere. 'Pride comes before a fall.'"

I love the hard-edged Slayer-esque stuff... but have they ever considered showing the "softer side" of LS (i.e. "Hearstrings Come Undone" by DH)???"
"I don't think we have that 'side?'" questions Garvin.

Does having members go on to sell millions of albums in their other bands bother them?
"No," concludes Fitzhugh. "It makes me happy. That way I can borrow money from them. Or equipment," he laughs.

Don't let the laughter and the lighthearted nature of these last few answers fool you, though. These guys might be gentle on the inside, but when they come together as a musical unit, they are giants – like an indestructible metal beast. You've been warned.

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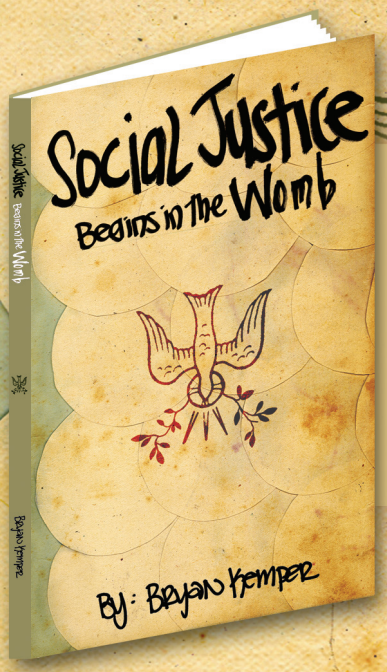
Photo: Chad Sengstock [ishotphotography.com]

Social Justice Begins in the Womb

-the new book from-

Bryan Kemper

founder of Stand True, Rock for Life
and the Pro-life Day of Silent Solidarity



Social Justice Begins In The Womb is a resource for anyone interested in the pro-life movement or pro-life issues.

This new book tackles some of the so called "tough questions" about abortion and discusses topics like protesting, graphic images, and current events.

ENDORSED BY
Ryan Dobson of KOR
-and-
Jeff Giltbert of Kutless

available at www.prolifeworld.com
preorders will begin shipping on january 19, 2010

a new publication from
CLAY BRIDGES

What **Dead By Sunrise** Says

WITH HIS MAIN BAND, LINKIN PARK, CHESTER BENNINGTON HAS BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE HIS MUSICAL DREAMS ... AND THEN TASTE SOME OF THE GOOD LIFE ALONG THE WAY. TURNS OUT HE TOOK A FAST TRAIN TO ROCK BOTTOM, WHERE HE FOUND HIMSELF AFTER A DIVORCE AND THE STRONG GRIP OF ADDICTION. JOINING FORCES WITH LONGTIME FRIENDS RYAN SHUCK AND AMIR DERAKH, FORMERLY OF ORGY AND CURRENT JULIEN-K MEMBERS, HAS PROVEN A CATHARTIC EXPERIENCE FOR THE SKILLED VOCALIST. AFTER READING ABOUT THE GUT-LEVEL HONESTY IN THE LYRICS THAT FOUND ITS WAY ONTO THIS SIDE PROJECT OF HIS, WE KNEW IT'D BE A GOOD INTERVIEW. TURNS OUT WE WEREN'T DISAPPOINTED.

Photo: Travis Shinn

If you had a time machine and could do one or a few things differently? Where would you go and what would you do? Why?
Oh man! You know, that's a question that I think people often fantasize about, but I don't know if I would go back and do anything differently. You know? I'm not sure if the events of our past have gotten us … and lead us to the places that we are today. I think things are random and everything's chance and all that kind of stuff, but I definitely feel like where I'm at right now is because of the collections of decisions or things that have happened to me or outside of me, because of time. I don't know if I would go back in time and change anything. I might go back in time and try not to interfere and look at some things, but I think that's about it. If that was the case, I'd like to see how the freakin' pyramids were built. It blows my mind.

Yeah, it's pretty amazing. Have you ever seen 'em?
I've not seen them in person, no.

Nah, me neither.
I would love to. It just kind of blows my mind how people built that stuff with their hands and on their backs, literally.

Yeah, the weight of one of those bricks is amazing.
Yeah.

I don't get it. Hey, in your interviews and bio, you've shared about some dark themes, like addiction. It's probably true that someone who has suffered in one area is now qualified to help others and lead them out, if invited, of similar problems. If you had the attention of a willing participant, what would you tell them?
That is absolutely true. One thing my sponsor always tells me is, 'Being an alcoholic… There's a difference between being an alcoholic and being just a guy who's drunk all the time.' Being alcoholic, we've turned our biggest liability into our number one asset. And I truly feel like that's the case. Yes, it does give an opportunity to help people out and really be of service to other people. So, if there was a willing participant, you know, I would tell them the same thing my sponsor told me when I was being…when I took the program seriously, and that is: 'Read the book. (laughs) Do what it tells you to do. Don't get lost in the details of your story. Just get to the nitty-gritty and, as long as you work the stuff, they will work for you.' And that's just the way it goes. It's really that simple. I know that may not be the great, all-powerful wisdom that people were hoping for, but that's just the reality of it.

Yeah. Well, sometimes when somebody is willing to listen, advice like that's really solid and as good as you can do.
Well, I've spent a lot of time in my life not doing that and trying to complicate it and trying to make it such a big deal. 'Look! This is my struggle!' You know? It took me a really long time and I relapsed a lot. I would begin using again or begin drinking again. That's my problem. And, until I met this guy, who literally broke it down into the most simplest, basic form and told me to stop trying to… We're very egotistical creatures – alcoholics are – and everything is all about us. 'Look at me!' And it hasn't nothing to do with that. 'Just follow the stuff and do what you're told, and it's easy.' He laughs. It's like, 'Okay. Well, (bleep). I guess I'll do that, then.' And it works.

How did you end up getting together in a working entity with these guys: Ryan Shuck and Amir Derakh, formerly of Orgy and current Julien-K members, Brandon Belsky, Elias Andra and Anthony Valcic?
Well, Brandon and Amir and I have been friends over the last 10 years. We met while we were working on *Hybrid Theory*. They were working on Orgy's second album, *Vapor Transmission*. And we became friends really quickly. We've remained really good friends. They've become family, basically, over the past 10 years. So, naturally, they had the opportunity to hear me playing these songs on my guitar and singing these songs and everything like that. They had the in, so to speak, in catching these things in their earliest form. So I asked them, 'Would they take interest to it?' And they really felt like they were really great songs and I felt that there was a connection there, so we started working on them together. And those two guys recruited Brandon when he was a teenager. He was like the runner that wanted to go to engineering school, so he became an engineer. Now he's a rock star, which is pretty cool. Anthony is a producer from Canada that we brought down to work on the Julien-K stuff and has slowly become, you know, the backbone of Julien-K's in-house production as well as programming and also the same things for Dead By Sunrise. Elias actually auditioned for Julien-K and got the job for them and I basically, once they were working with Ryan and Amir, pretty much told those guys… I didn't really ask them if they wanted to be in Dead By Sunrise, I just kinda told them they were. (laughs)

How does a working band member juggle a side project like Dead By Sunrise? And what are some of the things you're excited about now that this thing's taken life?
Well, I really… When I decided to start doing this thing, the first thing I did was tell the guys in Linkin Park, 'Hey, this is something I'm doing. I just want to make sure you guys are all cool with it. If you're not, then I'll stop doing it,' and everybody was cool. Secondly, then going to all the guys in DBS and going, 'Look, what we're doing here is really cool, but the reality is that Linkin Park comes first and, anytime that bell rings, I go.' And so, hence, the reason why it's taken four years to make this album. And, hence why it might be four years before the next one comes out. I don't know when the next record can come out, but I know we wanna make more. It really revolves around Linkin Park's schedule and what that allows me to do. So, that's how I juggle it. I'm just really frank and really straight-forward about it. I don't promise too many things that aren't realistic to either side.

What do you think of Jesus Christ?
Umm, I love Jesus Christ. I'm a Christian, actually.

Awesome! What do you think about His claims to be, 'the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father but by Me?'
Um, well, I really feel that that's… I do have my own personal belief in that. I'm not really big on telling people what they should think. But, a big part of Christianity is faith, and I believe that reading the teachings of Jesus Christ as well as some other really great religious leaders, too, that what He teaches is the Way and is the Truth. Whether He is the One and only true Messiah? That's for people out there to decide on their own. I have chosen that to be the way I believe.

At one point Linkin Park welcomed a new member into its fold -- Dave Farrell, who was in Tasty Snax for awhile. Was it awkward, weird or different at all recruiting a member that was part of the "Christian rock" scene? I'm wondering if you guys ever talked about that insular scene with Dave…
Well, Dave was actually a member of the band before I joined.

Like with Xero?
Yeah. He was actually in this band before I was, but he got signed to a deal with a Christian label and felt like he needed to fulfill that obligation. When he did, we were still looking for a bass player, we welcomed him in. We all come from diverse, different belief systems and…

(had to pause to answer a question on his end of the phone)

We really try to keep… We really respect each other's beliefs and everybody has… We have a lot of different people in this band who believe in a lot of different things, so we kinda don't really talk about religion very much, honestly.

What are the strengths (and any weaknesses you'd care to share) of Howard Benson as a producer? He's produced some great records…
Well, there's a lot of strengths to what Howard Benson brings to the table. He's great in terms of creating really thick – really beautiful, instrumental-sounding vocals. I think that's his strongest suit. I think that all producers have a weakness, but I think that's where the band needs to come in and really fill that gap; because it's really our responsibility to make a great record – not the producer's. You know what I mean? Our job is to write the songs. Their job is to tell us whether the songs are good or not. So, in terms of pulling the best product out of a band, I think that Howard Benson is one of the best.

Think back to when you were a younger musician and Linkin Park and you were not yet part of the band… How did you envision your career and what sort of attitudes and personality did you think you would have? How similar or different are those attitudes and personality today?
Umm, I really… When I was young, I had a very naïve outlook on what I thought being a professional musician would be like. When you're a kid and you're fantasizing about something that seems to be really almost like a dream kind of job to have, I don't think most people understand the extreme amount of work and effort it takes to go into something like that. But, at the same time, I figured out really quickly that it does take a lot of sacrifice. It does take a lot of really hard work and you kind of have to invest a lot in terms of time and your own money into doing music – especially if you want to do it as a profession. But, in terms of the attitudes in people, I honestly thought it was going to be a lot more difficult to be in a professional band, because before I became a professional... When I was doing music for fun and really going around and playing with guys in town – basically my home town of Phoenix and being in a band and not really… We weren't signed and all the money we made went to paying for rehearsal spaces and new equipment. It was really hard to be in a band, because there'd be two guys in the band that really clicked and the other two guys were just total (bleep) (bleep). Pardon my French. But, you know, everyone was on a different page. And it just seemed like it would be really difficult to be in a band. And then here I turn into a guy that's in a band like Linkin Park, where we all really get along and we all really communicate well and we're all on the same page. It seems like I've gotten lucky again in terms of being in a similar relationship state with the guys in Dead By Sunrise. Everything about this business surprises me. How hard it is to do it and also how difficult it is to be in a group of creative people that work well together. I've just been fortunate enough to be able to accomplish all those things.

["one last question, please Doug," interrupts the publicist]

Okay. I've got about three, but I'll just ask a new one…

HM Magazine has been around for 24 years. It covers this Christian metal and rock scene – bands like Underoath and Norma Jean and whatever. Speaking to our audience, how could we support someone like you who's out there in the real world, in the mainstream, doing what you do. What's something that we can do to support you?
That's a very interesting question. I think that, being a Christian myself and coming from a society where a lot of people believe a lot of different things, I think that as a Christian I find that I am most fulfilled when I am tolerant of what other people believe and how people view the world and I just try to bring a perspective of love and of happiness and of peace. And, I think there's another thing that also being in recovery as an alcoholic, I get an opportunity to actually go out and help people and really try to help people find hope and be friendly and not tell people what to do. And I think that's something that Christians everywhere would find really… It really makes you feel good when you do that – when you do things like that. And so, how could Christians out there could help me? Or help my band? Is continue being fans of music and continue being fans of music that has a moral and ethical kind of undertone to it. That's where I find that … the music that I'm drawn to the most is music that I feel fits my personality.

Cool, man.
I tried to make sense out of that. I hope I did.

I think so. Good answer. I wish you the best, man. I appreciate your time. And there's a new movie called, Lord, Save Us From Your Followers that, based upon what you said, you'd probably really dig it.
Cool. I'll check it out.

It's an indie documentary.AD
Lord, Save Us From Your Followers. Okay. I'll check it out. Thank you.

Take it easy. I hope to see you on the road.
Thank you. Take care.

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"I get an opportunity to actually go out and really try to help people find hope and be friendly and not tell people what to do. And I think that's something that Christians everywhere would find … It really makes you feel good when you do things like that."

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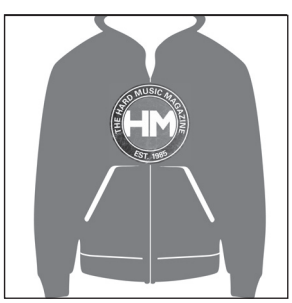

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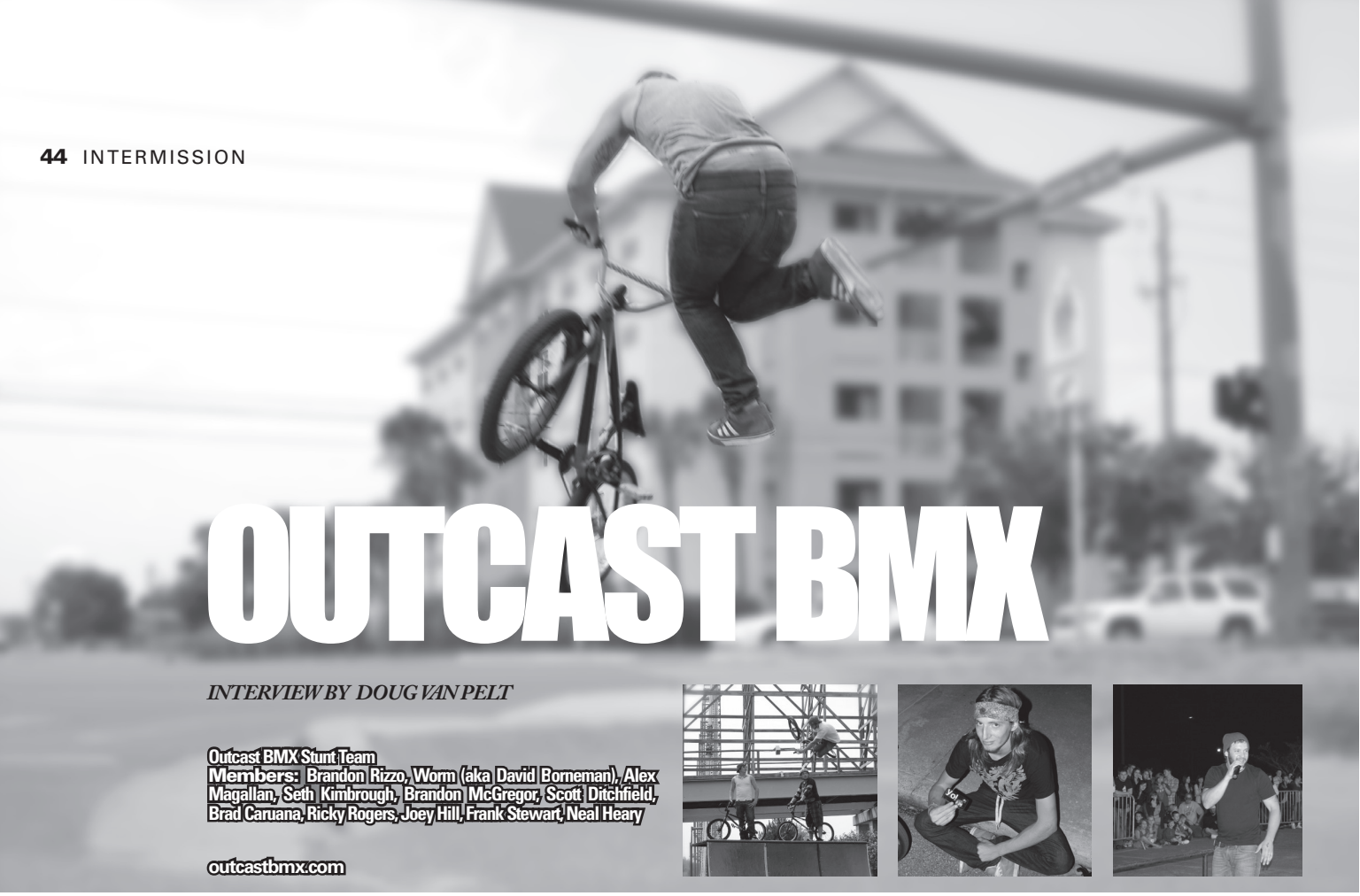


OUTCAST BMX

INTERVIEW BY DOUG VAN PELT

Outcast BMX Stunt Team
Members: Brandon Rizzo, Worm (aka David Borneman), Alex Magallan, Seth Kimbrough, Brandon McGregor, Scott Ditchfield, Brad Caruana, Ricky Rogers, Joey Hill, Frank Stewart, Neal Heary

outcastbmx.com

HM Magazine has partnered with the multi-faceted Reach Your City ministry, which boasts a myriad of teams – from sword swallowers to illusionists to skateboarders to freestyle motocross riders to a BMX stunt team. They often partner with hard music bands to present outreaches to schools, churches and other public places. We decided we should highlight the Outcast BMX stunt team at our earliest opportunity, which is now. Meet Brandon Rizzo, who heads up this hungry young team of fearless evangelists.

Whose idea was it to do tricks, feats of skill, visual and physical entertainment and use it in a way that is connected to a presentation of the Gospel message? And why did you follow along with this idea?
I started riding before I knew that BMX could even be something that God would use to share his name. When I was 16 I met a guy that was running a skatepark outreach ministry at a local skatepark in Buffalo, NY. He introduced me to the idea that God was so involved in my life that even BMX was something that His hand was guiding in my life. The ministry out there is called Enemy Opposition, our calling was basically fight the enemy and preach the hope of Christ any way possible, and for a 16-year-old kid, that was my outlet to share Christ.

What is the most difficult trick(s) you and your team riders do? What about it makes it so hard?
For me probably the hardest trick I do at a show would be a 720 (two full rotations). That one has taken me out a lot. All of our riders have different tricks they like to do. Funny enough ... the hardest tricks are usually the least impressive for someone who doesn't know the sport. Worm (pictured above with headband) is one of our riders. He flips higher than anyone I've ever seen. I'm too scared to go upside down (laughter). The front flip happens at some shows, too, but not often. Those are the tricks people want to see usually.

How glamorous (or NOT) is the lifestyle you lead with an outreach BMX team? Please explain...
Glamorous is the last word to describe what we do. Don't get me wrong, man. I love what I do and I am called by God to do this right now, but our life for seven months consists of: leave home; drive 14 hours; sleep; drive two hours; set up the ramp (very heavy); try to connect with the pastor who brought us out; chill out for a bit; our demo; tear down; and do it all over again for the next two weeks – all while living out of a suitcase and eating fast food. Worm doesn't mind the food, though. Fortunately, my wife Kellie comes on the road with us, which makes things a lot more fun for me.

What are some of the craziest stories you've heard from other riders and performers ... since you've been doing this?
One time at an outreach a rider sprained his ankle halfway through the show, so he was sitting to the side. Well, an opportunist in the crowd stole his bike in the middle of the show and tried to backflip the box jump (laughter). I hear it didn't end well.

What goes on at a typical show/demo/outreach?
We try to perform an amazing show every time, but the reality of my heart is the show is just our way to get somewhere to share the message of Jesus and how He redeemed my life here on earth. Not just a get-out-of-hell-free card, but God actually is real and will change your life if you follow Him. I usually just try and share my story of redemption after we ride and pray that people understand how real God is. The show is like our spectacle to draw a crowd and then share Christ with them.

How easy/difficult is it for you to perform at public schools? How do you tailor your message for different audiences? Why?
Very easy to perform the show. Kids are just stoked to be out of class and watch us ride, but when it comes time to talk to them I am not allowed to share Christ 90% of the time, which turns me into a motivational speaker. I just try to encourage kids to find hope and

find what's true in life. The Bible teaches that if you seek, you will find, so I try to focus on them seeking. We actually are able to talk to some kids after and they realize we are followers of Christ or they hear the music we play or just can tell something's different, ya know? God always seems to reach the ones He is after, regardless.

What was the journey for you and some of your riders like? I'm referring specifically right now to riding. Take us from riding around on the driveway, to possibly racing, to freestyle and trick BMX riding...
Alex Maggalan started out racing and just developed into doing more tricks. Worm grew up riding dirt jumps in backyards. My dad took me to my first skatepark. I went from rollerblading to skateboarding, then eventually bought a bike and stuck with it. When I was about 14 my grandpa helped me take apart a trampoline and built a big ramp out of that and a bunch of wood the Amish gave us. We started out rolling around and just fell in love with doin tricks, I guess.

What was the journey like for you from unrepentant person to follower of Christ? How did that happen?
It's been crazy, man. I grew up in a really strict church. Couldn't listen to music. Had no association with anything, really, outside of my church. Dead religion. I realized that I was still missing something, so I tried pursuing education. Fell off that wagon and got addicted to drugs and the whole sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll scene. One day I had a revelation from God and realized the life I was living – from religion all the way to drugs – was empty. I realized there was more. Jesus Christ was the answer and my hope rests only in Him. I began discipling to be a follower of Christ and read Ephesians 2:8-10. I realized that God has created me for a specific purpose that no one else could do. God is so real to me now. My whole purpose is the pursuit of God. That is why me and my wife do what we do – not to see 100,000 hands raised to accept Christ, but to speak the truth everywhere this ministry takes us, allowing the message of the cross to speak, to save the lost, to spark a passion in people's heart, to wake up and begin the journey of true discipleship after Christ.

What are your favorite styles of music and bands to listen to while you ride? What about when you're not riding? Any differences? Why?
I like a little bit of everything. Lately I've gotten the Owl City flu. That guy is amazing. His joy and creativity is so fresh to hear. When I'm riding at shows, my favorite artists to listen to are probably Underoath and Sleeping Giant. Worship metal is always gonna have part of my playlist. Other than that, John Mark McMillan and Mat Kearney and Jon Foreman pretty much round off my top six.

How can someone bring your team to their community?
All our booking info is up on our website: outcastbmx.com

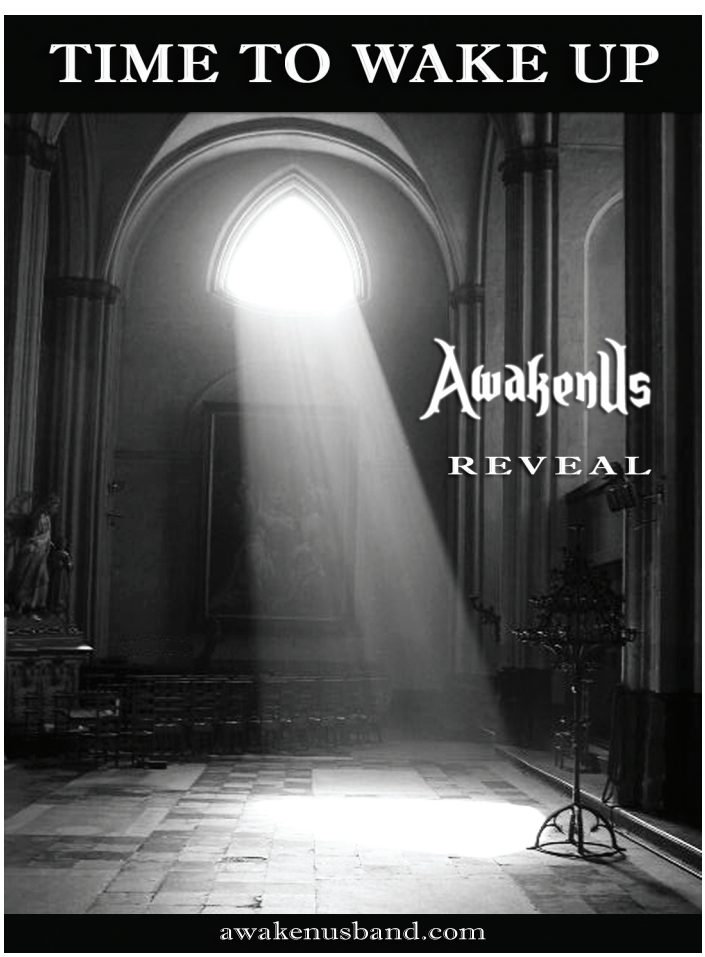
Anything else you'd like to add?
I'd just like to thank all our riders and the churches who bring us out. And my wife Kellie for being the rockstar wife that she is. And my son Rylan, who will be brought into this world in February! We are pretty stoked and blessed to do what we do.

Follow Christ in genuine child-like faith and let's let the world know who we are by our love for one another.

1 Cr 13:2 – *If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody.*

1 Cr 13:13 – *There are three things that will endure – faith, hope, and love – and the greatest of these is love.*

✖



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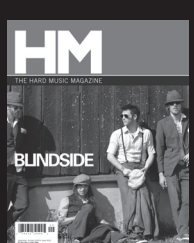

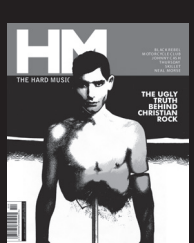

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Album reviews

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LIVING SACRIFICE

THE INFINITE ORDER

I suppose you expect a lot from storied veterans Living Sacrifice. You have to. When Brett Favre shows up to play, as a veteran, you expect him to either a) do it and do it well; or b) hang up the shoulder pads. It's in mediocrity where veteran players die. Likewise, you expect Living Sacrifice to come strong, avoid mediocrity and deliver. Otherwise, the album gets swept under the rug, finds a small niche of fans ("Their new stuff really DOES rock!"), but basically dies to their general fan base.

That being said, as Living Sacrifice has gotten older as a band, their music has naturally matured; they've had their thrash metal, metalcore, even Soulfly-inspired days. And though Living Sacrifice has had its share of ups, *The Infinite Order* doesn't overwhelmingly impress – and may be scarily hanging on in the purgatory state of mediocrity. Although I'm digging the metal roots the album is set in, *The Infinite Order* feels like it's caught in an in-between state. I want something faster, even though the record is still pretty fast. I want something more dynamic, even though it has its mood swings. Songs like "Organized Lie" get it. It's got the metal tempo, the breakdowns, the chants – it's a well-written song that delivers what I'd expect from most tracks on a Living Sacrifice full-length record. Unfortunately, with songs like "The Training," a dated, turn-of-the-century vibe hits and turns the record rapidly South. The record kicks off with a stellar "Overkill Exposure," but begins losing steam, track-by-track, only arbitrarily getting hit with a defibrillator in places to shock it back to life. Portions of "Nietche's Madmen" show the band's creativity in songwriting and technical skill – and I want more of it. The blessing and the curse (that bands like Living Sacrifice and ZAO deal with) is the expectation that with age comes quality. And what may be truest of all is that that's not true at all: Veterans can still write a record, but with that title, it may be harder than ever to write an incredible one. ~~[SOLID STATE] DAVID STAGG~~

Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

GWEN STACY
A DIALOGUE

I wasn't overly excited to listen to *A Dialogue* after the first riff sounded like I was about to roam down an Underoath record. But as the first track (and progressively, the album) went on, I was more and more intrigued; the tracks kept giving me a reason to listen. The Indiana-bred quartet wasn't writing cookie-cutter songs or riffs; I had to work to keep up with parts of *A Dialogue*. The dynamics of their sophomore release make the plot interesting, pulling the listener in, rather than re-hashing the same old formula. For example, instead of go to the breakdown as a core song element (the easy way out), the first real breakdown doesn't come until the very end of the second track, "Profit Motive." For inhabiting a tired genre ("screamo" or whatever you want to call it), Gwen Stacy has composed a record worth checking out. ~~[SOLID STATE] DAVID STAGG~~

BEFORE THERE WAS ROSALYN
THE FUHRER:
AN ALLEGORY OF A HISTORY OF DECEPTION

Creating a concept album about ruthless tyrannical governments must come from a band with boldness, dedication and heart for a devoted message. Houston's Before There Was Rosalyn proves to be just that band by releasing their sophomore album titled *The Fuhrer: An Allegory Of A History Of Deception*. "Fuhrer" is the German word for "leader" and was the infamous title Adolf Hitler bestowed upon himself. Using this term as an album title yields ambiguous interpretation, but perhaps this was the exact shock reaction the band was seeking. And with each of the 11 songs named after a particular type of leader such as "The Deceiver" or "The Revealer," the band proves to make a statement for the listener to decipher. Ultimately, this message just might be too intricate and should be lost in the cracks on most ears, so it's fortunate that music suffices. With a heavy emphasis on grudge riffs and melodic choruses, the quintet pumps out a thick brew of toughcore heavy enough for stout bikers, yet evoking enough for singing-along swooners. The band seals their mark as an artistically evolving band with the last track, "The Deliverer," which morphs into a climatic soar repeating: "How great is our God?" – a chorus so beautifully delivered you'll wish it never ends. ~~[VICTORY] DAN FRAZIER~~

DEAS VAIL
BIRDS AND CAGES

Those of us that have seen Deas Vail live know what they are capable of and with the release of *Birds and Cages* they take another step towards defining their sound in the studio. This band has always continued to move forward and this release is their best yet. Fans of Mae and beautifully done alternative pop will love the melodies and arrangements of lush orchestration, cool guitars and ethereal vocals. "Birds" and "Dance in Perfect Time" are two of the stand-out tracks blending the piano, guitar and swirling vocals over memorable hooks and enough artistic creativity to keep the indie-alternative crowd happy. Lyrically they're miles ahead of their competition with intelligence and artist originality. This may be pop, but it is not pop psychology. It's moving, emotional and it makes you think. ~~[GOTEE] DR. TONY SHORE~~

SEABIRD
ROCKS INTO RIVERS

Your reaction to Seabird's *Rocks Into Rivers* will likely hinge upon how you feel about the Coldplay-ization of popular music. Coldplay deserves a lot of credit for letting Brian Eno produce them; his credentials are unquestionable. But Coldplay – even with that added Eno coolness factor – is still wimpy. Chris Martin, with all his piano plunking and overly sincere singing, too often comes off like a soft handshake. 11 songs into this 12-track release, electric guitars introduce the aptly titled "Finally Done Right." And while keyboards and sweet vocals also find their place, it's just so darn good to hear something at least a little gutsy. Yet there just aren't nearly enough jubilant moments. This disc's title track sounds like Leeland-meets-Chris Tomlin at a Hillsong concert. But even so, Hillsong would have even rocked harder than this – and Seabird is the one on the alternative rock label! Coldplay turns alternative rock into an oxymoron because that band is neither of those things. Similarly, it's hard to tell the difference between Seabird and adult contemporary music – and that's just plain wrong. It's a shame because songs like "Don't You Know You're Beautiful" could have been great. Had someone like Switchfoot taken it on, for example, with an added power guitar riff, it would have carried the emotional punch it so severely lacks. Not all is hopeless, however. Seabird has far more lyrical depth than Coldplay, and has a lot of overall potential. If there's the equivalent to assertiveness training in rock & roll, would somebody please sign up Seabird? ~~[CREDENTIAL] DAN MACINTOSH~~

THE FOLD
DEAR FUTURE, COME GET ME

After a couple albums and one EP on Tooth & Nail, the Chicago-based The Fold decided to go their own way (or perhaps it was vice-versa) to craft their latest disc, *Dear Future, Come Get Me*. And it's easy to find the emotions involved in such changes as Dan Castady lets the listener in on the process on tracks like "Neverender," "Head Held High" and "Hold On." Sonically, the band took cues from recent Relient K offerings with its pop-punk leanings that expand to impressive fringes. "Head Held High" stuns with a softer synth delivery and a sweet electronic backdrop on "Dear Future." As the band takes their sound into their own hands, their sensibilities have only gotten stronger. And in the end, the lyrical and musical punch is much stronger this time around. ~~[TRUCK TREATMENT] MATT CONNER~~

TAKE IT BACK!
ATROCITIES

10 songs. 26 minutes. You already know what you're getting before ever listening to Take It Back!'s latest, *Atrocities*. The Facedown band delivers fast and loud on this sophomore outing and the only real atrocity is that it's not enough. Powerful anthems like "New Empire" only leave you wanting more. The guitar work on *Atrocities* is unflinching one minute, supportive the next – playing the hero (the guitar, get it?) on the 10 songs present here. Combined with Nick Thomas' tenor cries, it's an intelligent assault on our broken world and hard rock fans alike. ~~[FACEDOWN] MATT CONNER~~

ALESANA
THE EMPTINESS

Alesana continues their penchant for dark, mysterious themes with the telling of the shadowy murder of Annabel on *The Emptiness*. Creepy male and female voices weave the narrative, while each song flows into the next, enticing the listener to get lost in the story. Vocals drive the tracks – a surprising fact considering this is a six-piece. The songs remain accessibly structured, even more than on *Where Myth Fades to Legend*, with enough time changes to avoid redundancy. Early cuts like "The Lunatic's Lament" suffer a bit from too many repetitions, though by the middle of the album the tension of the unwinding story is enough to keep you invested. The band effectively avoids the tendency to throw in breakdowns haphazardly, instead peppering screams throughout to keep the songs constantly moving forward. "The Murderer" highlights the band's songwriting with varying tempos culminating in a climactic breakdown that fits well. The album builds to a chilling confrontation on "To Be Scared by an Owl" and, by the end of the final track, you'll feel like you're leaving a movie theater after seeing a gripping thriller. To get the full effect, listen to it in order. ~~[FEARLESS] COREY ERB~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Living Sacrifice *The Infinite Order*	04	03
Gwen Stacy *A Dialogue*	04	03*
Before There Was Rosalyn *The Fuhrer: An Allegory of a History of...*	04	03*
Deas Vail *Birds And Cages*	03	04
Seabird *Rocks Into Rivers*	04	02*
The Fold *Dear Future: Come Get Me*	03	04
Take It Back! *Atrocities*	03	03
Alesana *The Emptiness*	04	04
Starflyer 59 *Ghosts Of The Past*	04	03*
Saving Grace *Unbreakable*	03	03
Half-Handed Cloud *Cut Me Down & Count My Rings*	02*	04
Shapes Stars Make *These Mountains Are Safe*	04	04
Joy Electric *Favorites At Play*	03*	03
Nephesh *Inter Armas Silent Leges*	03*	04
The Blind Boys of Alabama *Duets*	03	03
Number One Gun *To The Secrets And Knowledge*	03*	04
Family Force 5 *Christmas Pageant*	03	

STARFLYER 59
GHOSTS OF THE PAST

Starflyer 59 has been at it a long time now, since the early '90s, so it's not surprising the band has two CDs' worth of b-sides and obscurities. It's especially fun to hear band leader Jason Martin taking on cover songs for a few of his primary musical influences. He plays the role of down-in-the-dumps Morrissey on The Smiths' "Please Please Please Let Me Get What I Want" and he also slows down and quiets The Church's "Under the Milky Way." Best of all, however, is how he re-imagines Bread's "Guitar Man" as a shoegazer anthem. And while there are no Starflyer 59 songs on *Guitar Hero* (yet), make no mistake about it, Martin is a guitar man. So whether he's taking the acoustic approach, as with "I Love You like the Little Bird," or amp-ing it up during "Minor Keys," Martin and Starflyer 59 consistently create heroic guitar music. [TOOTH & NAIL] DAN MACINTOSH

SAVING GRACE
UNBREAKABLE

Saving Grace finally might justifiably be known as more than just "that really hard band from New Zealand" with their second album *Unbreakable*. Having already established their presence with an EP, split and debut album, the Kiwi quartet returns with another lethal dose of brutallic: harsh guitar chugs, beat-down drums and grumbled vocals all sparsely slathered together. While it might lack any hope of dynamics, *Unbreakable* delivers a satisfying quench for authentic heavy metal fans – especially those who miss twirling their long black hair. [STRIKE FIRST] DAN FRAZIER

HALF-HANDED CLOUD
CUT ME DOWN & COUNT MY RINGS

ADD sufferer? Intrepid miniaturist? Either way, John "Half-Handed Cloud" Ringhofer is one prolific sancti-indie art-pop cat. As a fruitful branch of the tree planted by Danielson Famile and Sufjan Stevens, H-HC specializes in lo-fi pop snapshots packed with scriptural metaphor and an innocently shambolic, kitchen-sink production aesthetic. *Cut Me Down & Count My Rings* collects 46 such nuggets – in 78 minutes – recorded before and between bigger projects. If the effect is one of a mostly jovial, elongated medley, it's also a nutritious rush of deliberately, delightfully unrefined sugar. [ASTHMATIC KITTY] JAMIE LEE RAKE

SHAPES STARS MAKE
THESE MOUNTAINS ARE SAFE

Vocal-less rock is a challenge, but like Mogwai before them, Shapes Stars Make superbly layers shoegazing dynamics ripe with contrast and emotion while only using vocals (just like crystal and china) on special occasions. The songs on their debut, *These Mountains Are Safe,* often start off as a flicker to light the flame, but the crescendo builds and gradually ignites into a bonfire. And as the music carries your thoughts, the lyrics are untraditionally absent, which gives the freedom to interpret the music's message with your own free will. [DREAMT] DAN FRAZIER

ABANDON KANSAS
WE'RE ALL GOING SOMEWHERE

Solomon was, of course, right in saying that there's nothing new under the sun. But sometimes a band combines familiar elements in such a way as to bring something original out of the familiar. So it is with the major label CD EP debut by Abandon Kansas. Though it sounds like these four fellows may have taken in copious amounts of Switchfoot's sunkissed anthemics, Franz Ferdinand's disco-punk and an array of proggy/poppy recombinants from The Fixx to MUTEMATH, with some pop-punk thrown in for good measure, the results bristle with freshness. Their lyrical diversity should put them in good stead with both church youth group kids and commercial alt-rock radio's prime demographic alike. Instrumental interplay is fluidly tight, and Jeremy Spring's clarion baritone already sounds classic. Don't let me down, guys; your six songs here have primed me for more goodness to come. [GOTEE] JAMIE LEE RAKE

JOY ELECTRIC
FAVORITES AT PLAY

Thank Joy Electric's Ronnie Martin for re-igniting the debate over what constitutes "Christian" music. The electro-pop mainstay who once recorded an album called *Christiansongs* now tackles nine faves from general market alt rock, hip soundtracks and – why not? – Nelly Furtado. The JE spin on the latter's "Say It Right" starkly accentuates the La Nelly's latent melancholy. Elsewhere, Martin undertakes exercises in extensive renovation (All American Rejects) and giving synthy mirror images of songs' feelings with which he seems already sympatico (Fiest, Blink 182, The Killers). But Martin's take on Coldplay's "Viva La Vida" pales next to the live re-contextualization of the Chris Martin gem I heard from The Pet Shop Boys in concert. If his Ronald Of Orange side project and this possible tribute to his iPod energizes him for another original Joyous stunner, he could spend his time and fans' good will in far worse ways. [TOOTH & NAIL] JAMIE LEE RAKE

NEPHESH
INTER ARMAS SILENT LEGES

Nephesh nearly define multiculturalism unto themselves. The Columbian band with a Hebrew name ("being alive" or "life breath") and Latin album title imbue Scandinavian black metal with the bluster of Germanic romanticism. And lyrics come in Spanish and English apart from the aforementioned dead Italian tongue. Orchestral keyboards and touches of sternly swelling choral vocals bring to mind Richard Wagner as much as the metrically shifting blast beats and ornate guitar recall Dimmu Borgir. But their dual vocals – a regurgitory gonad pinch in a higher register and the lower handled in a manner akin to Cookie Monster (sorry about the cliche) after a couple of diction lessons – keep Neph' from the confines of the grand concert hall, though handily leading the mosh pit of their choice. Instrumental prologue and epilogue bracket what may be a concept album or more individuated onslaughts of aural darkness proclaiming the Light. Either way, *Inter Armas Silent Leges* stands as rather undeniable first salvo from an act with an already mature aesthetic. [NOCKTERNAL HEMIZPHEAR] JAMIE LEE RAKE

THE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA
DUETS

The Blind Boys of Alabama sure choose some odd duet partners! And while Lou Reed is no vocal match for these gospel greats, his "Jesus" is still one of the best unlikely hymns in rock history. Whether it's country (Randy Travis), reggae (Toots Hibbert), or blues (John Hammond) almost every gospel-(fill in the blank) combination is represented. Their friends are great, but these gospel powerhouses don't really need any star power; yet it's still fun to musically mix and match. [SAGUARO ROAD] DAN MACINTOSH

NUMBER ONE GUN
TO THE SECRETS AND KNOWLEDGE

Despite losing its entire original roster, primary member Jeff Schneeweis continued the Number One Gun moniker with 2008's *The North Pole Project* and now is back again with a fourth release titled *To The Secrets And Knowledge*. While utilizing the same elements as labelmates Anberlin (melodic soars accented by edge, but without the '80s nostalgia) and Mae (evocative lifts marinated in emotion, but without the electronic glitches), this album has hopes to finally carry the act into mainstream success. And the cover of Journey's "Don't Stop Believing" surprisingly feels very appropriate. [TOOTH & NAIL] DAN FRAZIER

FAMILY FORCE 5
CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

These guys freaked me out with this album. I figured it wouldn't be a typical Christmas album, but I was expecting FF5 to stay stuck in their crunk ways. Not so. It's all still crazy, but it sounds like they leaped with both feet in the direction of The Lonely Island or 3OH!3. Yeah, it's kind of bouncing with smooth hip-hop... After the shock wears off, it's mostly lots of fun. The boy band vibe they take in "Angels We Have Heard On High" is not so fun, but a minor road bump in a pleasant trip. [TMG] DOUG VAN PELT

PACIFICO
THIN SKIN AND AN OPEN HEART

Variety is not just the spice of life; it's also an element that helps keep CD reviewers from taking their own lives. And the variety expressed throughout Pacifico's *Thin Skin And An Open Heart* is a true lifesaver. "Friends & Lovers" begins with a country lilt, before wonderfully harmonized vocals kick in. This one is followed by "Stop!," which is driven by an irresistible power-pop electric guitar riff. It's hard to find a lot that is overtly spiritual on this offering, lyrically speaking, although "Salvation Army" hints at Christianity's role in a person's life. But then again, it could just be about hitting rock bottom and shopping at thrift stores. Yet it is primarily the sounds, and not the messages, that make this such a fine effort. One song is titled "We Are The Easily Forgotten," but nothing could be further from the truth when it comes to the band Pacifico. [ALLALOM] DAN MACINTOSH

DIVIDE THE SEA

MAN

If Maylene and the Sons of Disaster had a baby, and old-Norma-Jean/Luti-Kriss had a baby, and somehow, by the grace of God, those two babies got together and … had another baby – well, by golly, Divide The Sea's fantastically produced *Man* would pop out with a bloodstream carrying a worshipful flare. Although I might not give them mad props for "most original band of the century." By combining great musicianship with a powerful frontman, you've got a solid signing here. What kind of musical classification does a band like this put on their MySpace? "Heavy-as-an-elephant-meets-southern-metal-meets-chaotic-turned-melodic-turned-back-into-hardcore-meets-slow-jam-meets-guitar-solos-meets-slug-chunky-breakdown-chant-praise-madness?" As "Saved Alone" rejoices, "It is well with my soul…" (Give it a listen, you'll understand). [BLOOD & INK] LEVI MACALLISTER

FIREFLIGHT

FOR THOSE WHO WAIT

The already convinced should be thrilled with the forthcoming *For Those Who Wait*, yet another compendium of female-fronted rock (or is that rawk) songs intended for action movies and sports arenas alike. If anything, this latest is merely a continuation of *Unbreakable*, the band's breakout sophomore album that earned nods from Billboard and high-profile placements all over television. The title track pulls a slow burn before rising to its final crescendo as Dawn Richardson gives those barely holding on an anthem to cling to. "Desperate" and "Core of My Addiction" tread predictable ground both lyrically and musically, speaking to familiar themes in the genre, and the guitar work from Justin Cox and Glenn Drennen remains strong on both. Ultimately for those who waited on this disc, you'll find more of what you loved on the last. [FLICKER] MATT CONNER

TRANSATLANTIC

THE WHIRLWIND

After Neal Morse's conversion to Christianity, he told me there wouldn't be another Transatlantic project. Thank God he was wrong. I have been yearning for some classic prog rock and *The Whirlwind* does not disappoint. Transatlantic is somewhat of a progressive art-rock super group featuring members of Dream Theater, Marillion, The Flower Kings and Spock's Beard. This is their third album and it holds up well with the first two. It is easy to discern that this band is largely driven by Neal Morse (Spock's Beard) and Mike Portnoy (Dream Theater) because it sounds a lot like Neal's last few solo projects that they both play on. However, the addition of Roine Stolt (The Flower Kings) and Pete Trewavas (Marillion) does make a difference that brings this up a notch. In epic classic prog fashion *The Whirlwind* is a single piece of music that is almost 78 minutes long. Not to fear though, it's broken up into 12 separate tracks. Prog fans really have a reason to celebrate this one because musically it is even better than you would expect and lyrically Neal is at his best. You have to get the limited edition version, though, because it comes with a bonus disc that has 4 more new studio tracks and 4 cover songs. [RADIANT/METAL BLADE] DR. TONY SHORE

FRANK SCHWEIKHARDT

LIFE BUT NO MORE

Sounding like what comedian Steven Wright might were he to sing, Frank Schweikhardt reveals a weary soul all too aware of his sinful shortcomings on his latest longplayer. Those who enjoy the lightness of Denison Witmer and the dramatic weariness of Bon Iver could find favor in Schweikhardt's personal observations and personalization of certain Christian doctrines in his minimalist folk-pop. However, accompanying himself in at least a slightly less samey manner than he does throughout most of this, Schweikhardt might raise himself a notch or more among folkies appealing to alt rockers. [CROSSROADS OF AMERICA] JAMIE LEE RAKE

KUTLESS

IT IS WELL

This Kutless worship album opens with the hymn "It Is Well," introduced by a scratchy recorded version of the song, before going into full-on rock & roll. And this release follows with that general pattern – part worship hymn, part rock & roll – the rest of the way. Of the 12 tracks, the band had a part in writing half of them, which gives the CD a good new/old balance. And while the music doesn't rock as hard as typical Kutless work, it is nevertheless still tough. Best of all, there aren't too many overly familiar praise songs. Only about three, "Hungry," "Redeemer" (a medley of "Oh Lord, You're Beautiful" and "There Is A Redeemer"), and "God of Wonders," have been recorded multiple times. It's also a treat to hear a guitar band, such as Kutless, on a piano-backed song like "What Faith Can Do." Yes, all is well with Kutless' worship. [BEC] DAN MACINTOSH

STRIA

CHIMERA

If you thought that the chin dipping, word rapping, gut singing hybrid chug rock was dead, Stria is here to prove you wrong. Like Linkin Park's little step-brother that was rejected by Wind-Up Records, Stria delivers on their debut album *Chimera* a strong nostalgia for the late '90s hard rock that rivaled bubblegum pop on the airwaves and filled arenas with a baggy jean and black t-shirt clad audience. But after hearing Stria's multiple tracks consecutively filled with the same clichéd formula, you'll quickly remember why you grew to hate this music the first time around: because everyone discovered something better. [RAGING STORM] DAN FRAZIER

VIOLET BURNING

STING LIKE BEES AND SING

The Cure-y electric guitar work on "More," which was recorded live along with nine others at Cornerstone Festival in July of 2007, may fool you into thinking your dream of finding the Robert Smith of Christian music has come true. (But fans of Mike Pritzl have always known this). The Violet Burning have never sounded more aggressive – especially during "Do You Love Me?" – and this new concert collection finds the band at their absolute best. [THEVIOLETBURNING] DAN MACINTOSH

HEARTS OF SAINTS

S/T

If the name Special D rings a bell, then you're slightly ahead of the learning curve regarding new modern rock act Hearts of Saints. After signing to Grits' new record label, Revolution Art, the Kentucky quartet ventured toward a more dance rock oriented sound and changed their name in the process. And now, the band's self-titled becomes the label's attempt to branch into the rock and roll market. Hearts of Saints is largely a solid entry to begin with. The band's clearly at home in familiar radio rock territory and they execute their craft quite well. Accessible riffs match equally accessible melodies for a pleasant rock sound buoyed by harmonies and the occasional synth work. "Breakdown" and lead track "The Secret" deliver the highlights, although there's no real weak spot among the bunch. Nothing spectacular, but a solid debut nonetheless. [REVOLUTION ART] MATT CONNER

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Pacifico *To The Secrets And Knowledge*	03*	03
Divide The Sea *Man*	03*	04
Fireflight *For Those Who Wait*	03	03
Transatlantic *The Whirlwind*	03	03*
Frank Schweikhardt *Life But No More*	03	03
Kutless *It Is Well*	03	03
Stria *Chimera*	03	02*
Violet Burning *Sting Like Bees And Sing*	03	04
Hearts Of Saints *S/T*	03	03
The Crucified *The Pillars Of Humanity*	05	
Guardian *First Watch*	04	
W.A.S.P. *Babylon*	03*	
Black Rebel Motorcycle Club *Live*	02*	
Creed *Full Circle*	03	03*
Green River Ordinance *Out Of My Hands*	03	04
Sincerely Paul *Grieve*	03	03
Trans-Siberian Orchestra *Night Castle*	03	03*
Queens Club *Nightmarer EP*	04	03*
Templar *Dark Circus*	03	03

THE CRUCIFIED
THE PILLARS OF HUMANITY

You already know this is a ridiculously good, must-own album for the hard music enthusiast, because you already have it (the original release on cassette or CD, with the lame 2-dimensional artwork). What you need to know is, "Did the remix by Jason Martin and Steve Dail make a sonic difference?" You'll be glad to know that the answer is a resounding YES! For instance, the galloping riffage in a tune like "It's All About Fear" receive an extra spark and edge that sounds more alive (like it might come right outta the speakers and throttle you) than it does some old analog recording. It's bright yet thick. Don't hesitate to add it to your collection or, better yet, get the boxset. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL]~~ DOUG VAN PELT

GUARDIAN
FIRST WATCH

Overlooked in terms of the numbers they sold later after leaving the secular label for Christian music stardom, this debut album by Guardian stood above most of its peers. Yes, it's time-stamped squarely in the '80s with production (handled by Stryper's Oz Fox), guitar fills, bent notes galore and vocal histrionics galore, but it's the real deal – not a cheap imitation. And check out how the finger-plucking intro to "One Of A Kind" pulls it into the "timeless" song mode. ~~[RETROACTIVE]~~ DOUG VAN PELT

W.A.S.P.
BABYLON

What's this old frontman named Blackie Lawless up to now? Can he be taken seriously? What would you say if I told ya he found a way to do his fanbase proud by sounding hungry and energetic with a lyrical theme drenched in biblical prophecy? While I was never a fan of his vocals and anthemic style, I have to say this album has caught my ear. Their cover of Deep Purple's "Burn" is frightfully good, too. ~~[GLOBAL MUSIC]~~ DOUG VAN PELT

BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB
LIVE

This triple-disc collection (2 DVDs & a CD) showcases BRMC in all their black & white coolness. Unlike many CD/DVD live album combinations (take HIM or Muse, for example), this one sounds better than it looks. While the live performance is shot professionally with great cameras, I find myself enjoying the energy of the tunes with my eyes closed more than locked in on what's shown. It's almost as if the 48-page booklet captures their aesthetic better than the high-end video cameras did. ~~[ABSTRACT DRAGON]~~ DOUG VAN PELT

CREED
FULL CIRCLE

Scott Stapp reminds me of our quarterback in high school. His name was Dusty West and people called him "lil' John Elway," partly due to our mascot being the (Kern Valley) Broncos, but I bet he started the nickname himself. That's right, he was full of himself ... but he had talent. He was a hotdog water skier that ruled the nearby waters. Seemed like everything he touched went All-District. The people at Lake Isabella even tapped him for their commercial, filming him spinning in a stand-up position down their long steel slides culminating with a one-and-a-half into the water. One weekend his ego got the best of him and he called us linemen "worthless," hinting that he didn't need us to win. In the course of our game against the lowly Lone Pine Eagles that next Friday, he yelled at us in the huddle, muttering that stinging judgment, again. Marty, Pat, John, Steve and I all looked at each other and nodded. We then let the eager Lone Pine linemen opposite us straight through the line for an easy sack. He did his best to outrun them, but he spun right into a spearing helmet that left him bruised and bleeding. We did this for two plays in-a-row until he apologized in the huddle. "You know what, guys?" he said, flipping his mouthpiece and sending a huge wad of blood that had filled the molded cavern splattering towards the ground... We all stared at that coagulated mass of red liquid as he continued on about "deserving every lick he was getting." We looked back at his eyes as he said, "I'm sorry. I've been a total (bleep) to you guys. I wouldn't blame you if you didn't throw another block for me the rest of the season." One of our guys stuck his paw out and settled the matter with a handshake that made its way around the huddle. Dude learned his lesson and the team re-grouped and supported him. "Humble pie tastes like (bleep)," he said after the game, and I think that Creed's lead singer can relate. They've rallied together – like our Broncos did that game with 28 unanswered points – and written a solid album that makes those that can remember almost forget all about that *Weathered* album and all the Stapp drama that followed. There's a lot of us-vs-them language in these songs, but nary a pitiful word in the bunch. With the experienced production touch of Howard Benson, the sounds have more youth and urgency in them than you'd expect from a bunch of old guys. Not a classic, but not bad, either. ~~[WIND-UP] THE KERN COUNTY KID~~

GREEN RIVER ORDINANCE
OUT OF MY HANDS

Few places exist more suitable than the current touring slot where Green River Ordinance resides, opening for *American Idol* winner David Cook. The Texas five-piece melds the best of most modern pop/rock acts around them to create a fantastic label debut, *Out of My Hands*, that bears no throw-away tracks front to back – a startling testament in today's single-driven age. Third Eye Blind, Counting Crows, Our Lady Peace – every act appears in some influential form on *Out of My Hands* and show vocalist Josh Jenkins and company are fans, first and foremost, of a great melody. "Outside" should sweep its way to the top of the charts if given half a chance and the title track enjoys an Augustana-like structure. The same could be said of every other song, honestly. And that's a good thing for the guys in GRO. ~~[VIRGIN]~~ MATT CONNER

SINCERELY PAUL
GRIEVE

When Sincerely Paul released *Grieve* in 1991, the world wasn't quite ready for such gravely honest Christian music. This double-disc reissue's CD notes tell of an embarrassing early band church gig, and that combination (dark rock group and conventional church) was clearly not a match made in heaven. Fortified by four bonus live cuts on the set's second disc, this new package provides your second chance to hear James Preston's desperate, before-its-time vocals. It's a reminder that Sincerely Paul's record deal with Blonde Vinyl was truly its only heavenly match. ~~[SLIDE MUSIC GROUP]~~ DAN MACINTOSH

TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA
NIGHT CASTLE

Trans-Siberian Orchestra – Night Castle

Reading other reviews, you get a real mix of "love it/hate it" about this release. Being TSO's second non-holiday album, it tells a story – in 21 songs (plus 5 non-story bonus tracks), on two discs with a nice 68-page booklet. At first listen I was less than impressed, especially when compared to previous releases. Upon subsequent listens though, the songs and the story continued to grow more enjoyable. While there are a couple rockers, this release is a bit more theatrical and melodic, ending up having more "opera" than "rock" for this rock-opera release. The 21-song length can begin to feel a bit long-winded for a story that could probably have been told in one disc; but it is what it is, and if you love it, you'll love having more, and at a good price too. If judged as a stand-alone project, it is quite enjoyable. ~~[ATLANTIC]~~ JEFF MCCORMACK

QUEENS CLUB
NIGHTMARER EP

This band can't be pigeon-holed into one of these disparate musician stereotypes: leather-jacketed hedonists straddling Harleys, chicks on one arm and Strats in the other; ultra-cool, tortured artistes irresistible to brainy, beautiful women; and nerdy misfit techno-geek-knob-twisters who have no women but really cool gear. Instead, *Nightmarer* rocks and bleeps with a cool amalgamation of all three, fused with quirky evocative lyrics. Queens Club, who even looks like mutant offspring of the above, bring on your full-length – I'm ready to wake up screaming again. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL]~~ CAREY WOMACK

TEMPLAR
DARK CIRCUS

Third release shows a now well-established darkwave band, featuring heavy guitar-driven metallic music with a dark-sounding modern rock feel. Vocal styles here differ from the almost Rob Zombie feel of their last release, in places now giving a more mainstream alternative sound, while mixing in some death growls as well as an almost punk-like barking in places. Overall, a very solid release leaping large bounds over their previous two, and should garner them even more attention. ~~[YOUNGSIDE]~~ JEFF MCCORMACK

PICK OF THE LITTER

Jeremy

Immediately after the release of *Images & Words* the members of Queensryche entered the studio and recorded *Operation Mimeslime*, the masters of which were lost ... until now. I'm just kidding, of course, but this band known simply as Jeremy could be the prog-metal fulfillment of such a dream. Guitars and vocals shred and dance around in a compelling and creative ensemble that demands a listen. While not everyone can play solos and wail away on their instruments, it can get boring if there's no melodic payoff and not many pairs of ears want to put up with a mediocre vocalist. There's nothing but smoothness and pleasantness dripping from the vocals of Mo Jung-Gil. This band is just the complete package ... and they have quite the extensive catalog on the Evolution Music label in Korea. (Doug Van Pelt)

jeremyfan.com

☆ The Dream The Chase

Ahh... Intense melodic screamo can be such a breath of fresh air when you've been listening to too much mellow music. These guys attack in the vein of TDWP but have the sweet vocals of an Emery or RJSA. While these references might point you in the right direction, don't think "copycat," because The Dream The Chase is onto something fresh ... and great.

myspace.com/thedreamthechase

Nathan Lee

Fabulous! Soulful in a Springsteenish way. High-quality songs, textures.

nathanleemusic.com

Levi The Poet

This recording of street-level poetry is loud and furiously mixed with emotion and the occasional sound effect, but it's the subject matter that slaps you in the face. When he delivers his post-suicide goodbye in "When I Go To Meet God" it's easy to feel the pain his loved ones would've felt if he had done it, just like his doubtful lines ring of authenticity.

myspace.com/levithepoet

☆ The Awakening

Frontman/vocalist Asthon Nyte is one of those dark and doomy artists that adroitly understands the importance of both pop melodies & power chords. RIYL: MM, HIM, Type O. *Tales of Absolution & Obsoletion* is his latest band effort from this recently transplanted-to-America South African.

the-awakening.com

Misery Chastain

Remember Mortal Treason? This speed/black/death/hardcore metal hybrid is Seth Kimbrough's new musical incarnation. Dynamic and full of sweeping crescendos – without resorting to washes of keyboards. And lots of blast beats.

myspace.com/miserychastainmetal

☆ Future Is Tomorrow

This Italian prog metal band attacks their instruments in a way that creates a great dynamic when they ease off the throttle and let their vocalist (Max) soar like a hawk above the layers of sound. A shredder's delight.

futureistomorrow.it

☆ Ives The Band

Albuquerque, NM should be proud of this creative quartet, who have crafted a story/concept album called *The Incredible Story of Mr. Birch*, which runs the gamut from dancing piano keys to romping post-hardcore rock. Imagine Thrice in one of its experimental moods. I know what you're thinking, though: 'A concept album?! Those are always boring!' Not so here, with compelling melodies woven through song after song. It could very well be a normal "disconnected-from-one-song-to-the-next" album and stand on its own that way, too.

ivestheband.com

Truby

Jason Truby has branched out beyond instrumental noodling on his new CD, *Entropy,* to contemplative, mid-tempo modern rock. His voice is exceptional ... and with help from musicians like Lance Garvin and Barry Poynter, you can bet that the band backs him up with a solid foundation.

jasontruby.com

Realign

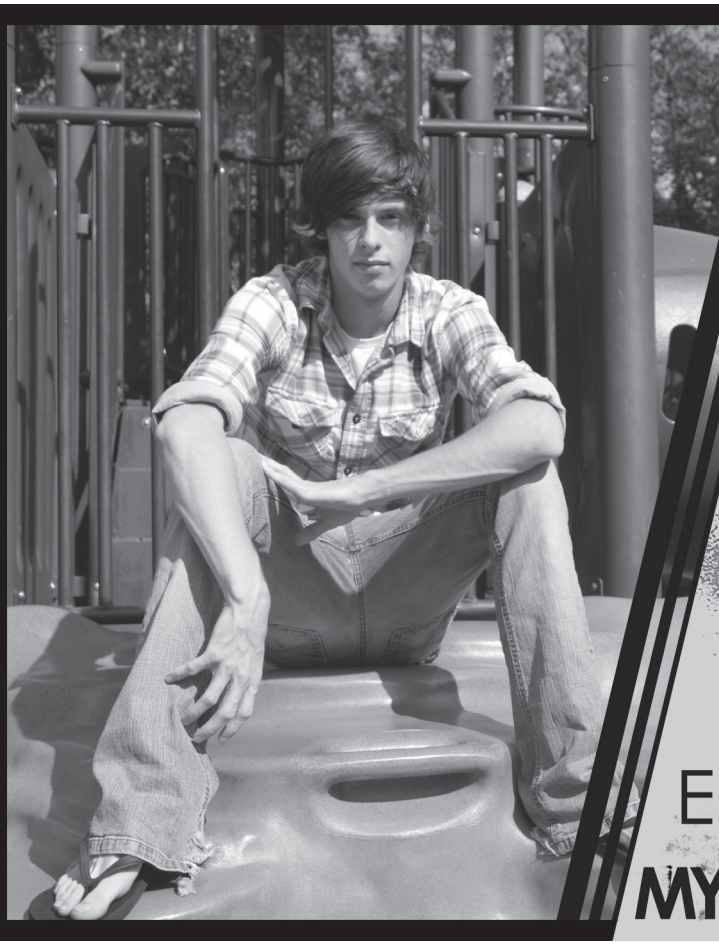
Pounding drums, thick, chunky riffs and melodic hooks flank this tight hard-rockin' band in the vein of Red, Chevelle and Breaking Benjamin.

realignband.com

☆ Anderson Cale

Stunningly beautiful instrumental music – a distraction from distraction. Super chill and produced with excellence.

myspace.com/andersoncale



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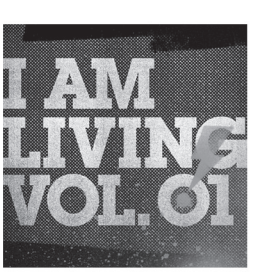
Where there is no vision, the people perish. { proverbs 29:18 }



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The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art (Part the Twentieth)

We've been examining in this series possible answers to the question of why millions of American Evangelicals have produced so little quality art of any kind, and have seen that this is to a large extent due to a limited (or distorted) view of Biblical teaching (and/or a failure to act on or consider the implications of its teaching), even though Scripture instructs Christians in "every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17), which includes making art.

We've explored the destructive effects of distorted or shallow views of the Doctrines of Creation and Eschatology, which lead to devaluations of the material world and of time as the arenas of God's Purposes, resulting in pessimism concerning history and matter as being Satan's domain which needs to be escaped from, rather than fulfilled and redeemed.

We saw that sub-Scriptural views of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity as rejections or misunderstandings of the Three Persons of the One God destroy the possibilities of Scriptural justifications of seeing symbols as being revelatory of multiple meanings and unified meaning simultaneously.

Such a denigrated perspective on the Trinity leads as well to confused ideas about the reflected Mystery of God in men, seeing men as simplistic machines subject to quick-fix techniques, and who exist primarily for one mode of being, rather than complex, nuanced creatures capable of reflecting God in multi-faceted ways, resulting in an over-simplistic representation in our art forms.

Having looked cursorily at the results of the distortion of these Doctrines, we turn now to begin a consideration of the implications of the Doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ, which teaches, in the words of the Definition of the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) (which summed up Biblical teaching), that Jesus Christ was "at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man…recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of Him, and our Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us."

Christ Jesus was both fully God and fully Man at the same time, with no confusion between His Natures, both of Which co-inhered in a great Mystery to form His One Person. Such an idea was radical at the time of His Birth in the ancient Classical world, since the dominant worldview of the era (neo-Platonism) held that it was impossible for the spiritual God to have any contact with physical matter.

This was because God was not seen as the Creator of matter, and the physical was believed to have been made by an evil being (or to be an illusion). This fueled a perspective on the physical which saw it as a highly inappropriate medium for spiritual expression.

The Incarnation of Christ, in which God (in His Second Person) joined Himself to a human body, soul, and spirit, means that God is not opposed to matter, since He assumed a physical Body forever (John 1:14; 20:24-29; 1 Cor. 15:12-23; Eph. 1:19-23).

This is good news for Christian artists (and thus for all artists), since the Incarnation means that not only is matter fit for spiritual expression, but that such an expression is the highest potential for matter (indeed, that matter inescapably involves spiritual expression). The fact that the Spiritual God is forever joined to the Matter of Christ's Physical Body is an eternal refutation of all dualistic views which set at variance spirit and matter (Lord willing, we'll look at more on this later).

The Incarnation guarantees the suitability of matter for spiritual expression, demonstrating Biblical claims that physical things are the proper arena for spirituality (Rom. 12:1-2; etc.), including, of course, the arts. A defective view of Christ's Incarnation leads to a devaluation of matter as a suitable material for spiritual expression, and of matter's value altogether.
[kempercrabb.net]

The way I see it
Chris Wighaman

Here's a stupid question: Are you on Facebook? I am guessing you are, there are more than 300 million users! 50 percent of those 300 million sign onto their Facebook account every day. There are 45 million status updates every day. The world is addicted to Facebook! Maybe I shouldn't speak for the world, so I'll just admit my own addiction: I am addicted to Facebook, as I have spent too much time updating my status and reading everyone else's I know.

I enjoy catching up with people who live near and far from me. I find it entertaining to see pictures of friends and family who have deemed odd events such as "my bad hair day" and "little jimmy's potty training!" as something worth sharing. Now there are a few things I loathe. I cannot stand the updates for some computerized farm/mafia/fantasy world someone is running. I do not want to become a fan of "Zach Efron's new movie" or "the unlike button." The thing I find the most annoying might be the "friends" I have who constantly say negative things like: "I hate bologna" or "Another boring meeting" or "How stupid is [fill in the blank with some name]?" There are some people who spread their negativity far and wide. They bring me and their 173 "friends" down with daily posts on why life is so miserable.

One of my favorite verses is found in Isaiah 52:7

How beautiful on the mountains
are the feet of those who bring good news,
who proclaim peace,
who bring good tidings,
who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion,
"Your God reigns!"

Isaiah is proclaiming the beauty of feet, which usually at their best are described as smelly! These feet are beautiful just because they belong to the person who is bringing good news! When we are in Christ we have THE Good News. Our lives should be a constant reminder to everyone around us of everything that is good. If our lives were a Facebook account we would spread good news, peace, good tidings and salvation; these are the things that should be the forefront of our conversations. We can't just ignore all the hard things in life, but to dwell solely in the negative does nothing but bring everyone down around us. Our God is so good and we are to proclaim His glory to the world around us.

Devotions
with Greg Tucker

"If you offer a gift at the altar but remember your brother has something against you, set your gift down and first take care of that; then come and offer your gift."
—Matthew 5:23-24

I can't tell you how often people have sat in my office bemoaning the state of their personal finances. Single, married, young and old, it appears no one is exempt from the risk of dropping the ball when it comes to handling money, and the culprit can usually be described in three simple words: credit card debt.

Who among us hasn't spent a small fortune paying on some interest-laden account before we knew better? As a young adult I personally experienced the sickening dread of avoiding telephone calls, knowing it was probably someone I owed.

That was before I discovered the secret.

The key to financial sanity is keeping your accounts short. After working like crazy to establish a zero-balance on your Visa or MasterCard, focus a keen eye on how you use plastic each day, and return it to zero immediately. Don't bury your head in the sand like a businessman I know. He charged a $5 Starbucks purchase every morning and at the end of each month faithfully paid $30 on his credit card — the minimum amount accepted. But after a year or so of blissful naivety, one morning he awoke to find his small purchases, plus interest, had grown to a debt of thousands of dollars. By that time, digging out seemed impossible.

The key to many of life's challenges is staying on top of things. This week I received a text message from a friend who has asked me to keep him on track spiritually. He knew I was busy traveling, so he got right to the point: "Let's talk ASAP. I need to keep an account short."

I called from a crowded hotel lobby and listened as he explained his interest in a female he had just met. "Nothing has happened," he admitted. "Not even flirting, but this woman definitely appears on my radar for some reason, and I want you to know so it doesn't turn into something."

Because of his honesty at square one, my friend had cleared the debt; he'd brought the power of temptation back to zero. And as he does this each and every time, he's destined for spiritual greatness and minimal heartache.

You'll never regret keeping your accounts short. Whether it's your Discover Card or discovering an area of personal struggle, address it, and confess it, today.

[In addition to pastoring, Greg Tucker is president of Tucker Signature Films, Media & Event Services in Beverly Hills. He loves Cracker Barrel, and you can write him at TuckerG@mac.com]

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LIFEstyle

THE TAKING OF PELHAM 123

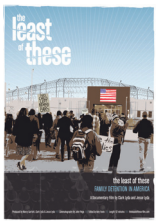
While this wasn't the epic suspenseful thriller that the trailer had me thinking it was, it was still a nice drama between Denzel Washington and John Travolta's characters. Travolta's Mr. Ryder was one dark son of a gun, though (who seemingly liked to flavor his every conversation with plenty of profanity). The best part of the film was the unfolding mystery (the how and the why) surrounding the crime. [Sony Pictures] *Doug Van Pelt*

[Cuss: 80 | Gore: 5 | Sex: 1 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

THE LEAST OF THESE

An informative but somewhat dry documentary on a detention facility in Taylor, TX (not far from the HM Ranch) where illegal aliens and their families are kept awaiting investigation and/or deportation in our post-9/11 age. The angle, of course, is the question of whether they're being treated fairly or not. [Indiepix] *DV*

[Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]



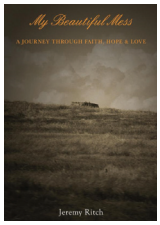
IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE

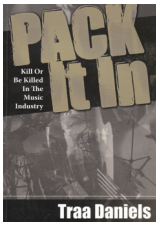
The team that put together the uber-goofy *Holyman Undercover* movie are back with a drama that shows its main character, Detective David Ramsey (David A.R. White) wrestling with a disappearance and what it might mean to his new-found faith. [Pure Flix] *DV*

[Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

MY BEAUTIFUL MESS | JEREMY RITCH

Jeremy, the founder of Hold Fast Ministries, has a heart for the underground scene – evidenced by his sharing from the stage at various festivals. With his first book, he shares his *...Journey Through Faith, Hope & Love*, which includes all the doubts, twists and turns he's faced in these last few years. It's not written with absolute perfect grammar and eloquence, but it's raw and real. [jeremyritch.com] *DV*





PACK IT IN | TRAA DANIELS

P.O.D.'s bassist Traa Daniels shares a lot of practical wisdom about the music business, as well as several interesting stories from his personal experiences that brought him from logging thousands of miles in a van to the large venues they played and the Platinum-selling plaques they were awarded. He uses easy-to-understand illustrations to make points to help guide most aspects of the music business from the perspective of the musician. It's not a substitute for hiring professional help and it won't equip you with all the knowledge you need to succeed, but the knowledge dispensed here will go a long way to fulfill the book's subtitle: *Kill Or Be Killed In The Music Industry.* [ryotentertainment.com] *DV*

GRIFFIN + THREADLESS

There was this co-op initiative that has helped improve the life of iPhone users. Griffin, who makes tons of iPod and iPhone gadgets, joined forces with Threadless Tees to fuse a cool t-shirt design with a hardshell iPhone case. The thin design wraps the pricey and fragile gadget snugly with a semi-rubber material that'll spread the shock/force of a drop, but it does so without bulking the sleek, thin design ... and it looks pretty darn cool. [threadless.com/griffin] *Doug Van Pelt*

[Setup Ease: A+ | Performance: A+ | Price: $34]

LOUD ENOUGH

Ultimate Ears, the music industry leader for in-ear monitors has taken their concern for hearing health and their sonic engineering know-how and come up with these volume-limiting earphones. They're designed for kids (ages 6+), but work well for anyone. Since hearing damage is permanent, it makes sense to protect ears when they're young. These reduce sound pressure levels by up to 20db, but sound great, are lightweight and look cool [loudenough.com] *DV*

[Setup Ease: A+ | Performance: A | Price: $39]

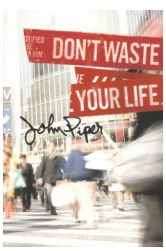
NC300 HEADPHONES

Able Planet has developed some compact, headphones with an adjustable headband, in-line volume control and noise-cancelling capabilities. While the cups mute out the outside noise pretty well on their own, the noise-cancelling feature helps give you that isolation that can help in a crowded room, outdoors or public transportation. It also folds up into a nice, sturdy zippered carrying case for travel. [ableplanet.com] *DV*

[Setup Ease: A+ | Performance: B+ | Price: $129]

FROM ZERO TO ROCK HERO | COLLINS DESIGN

This guitar instructional book starts simple for the beginner and quickly advances dialing in "dirty" sounds, picking techniques, scales and even "feel." Included is an audio disc with samples to allow you to hear it the way it's supposed to sound. [harpercollins.com] *DV*



DON'T WASTE YOUR LIFE | JOHN PIPER

Chad Johnson, who launched Come&Live this past year, gave me a copy of this book. "This is the book that ruined my life..." It helped inspire him to take the current leap of faith he's on. In these pages, Piper takes dead aim at some of the harder, more challenging teachings of Jesus, like selling all we have, giving the proceeds to the poor and following Him. He doesn't try to dart around them or explain them away, but builds a case for the believer to live a life of radical obedience to God. He takes specific calls, like that of forgiveness, and answers the "yeah, but" and the "what if" scenarios as he pushes the reader to greatness (and service) in the kingdom of God. And, like the "hard teachings of Jesus," the challenges and points in this book are hard to ignore. [crossway.org] *DV*

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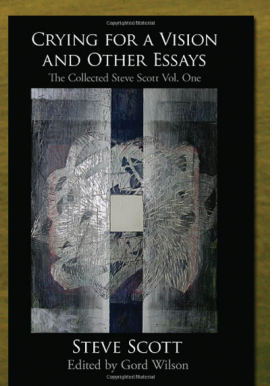

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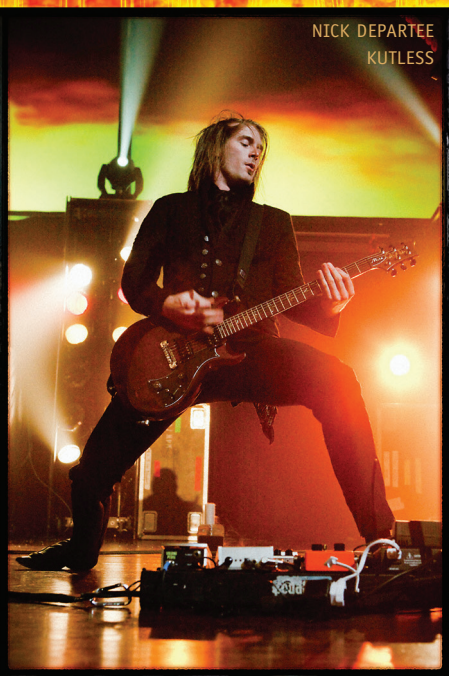
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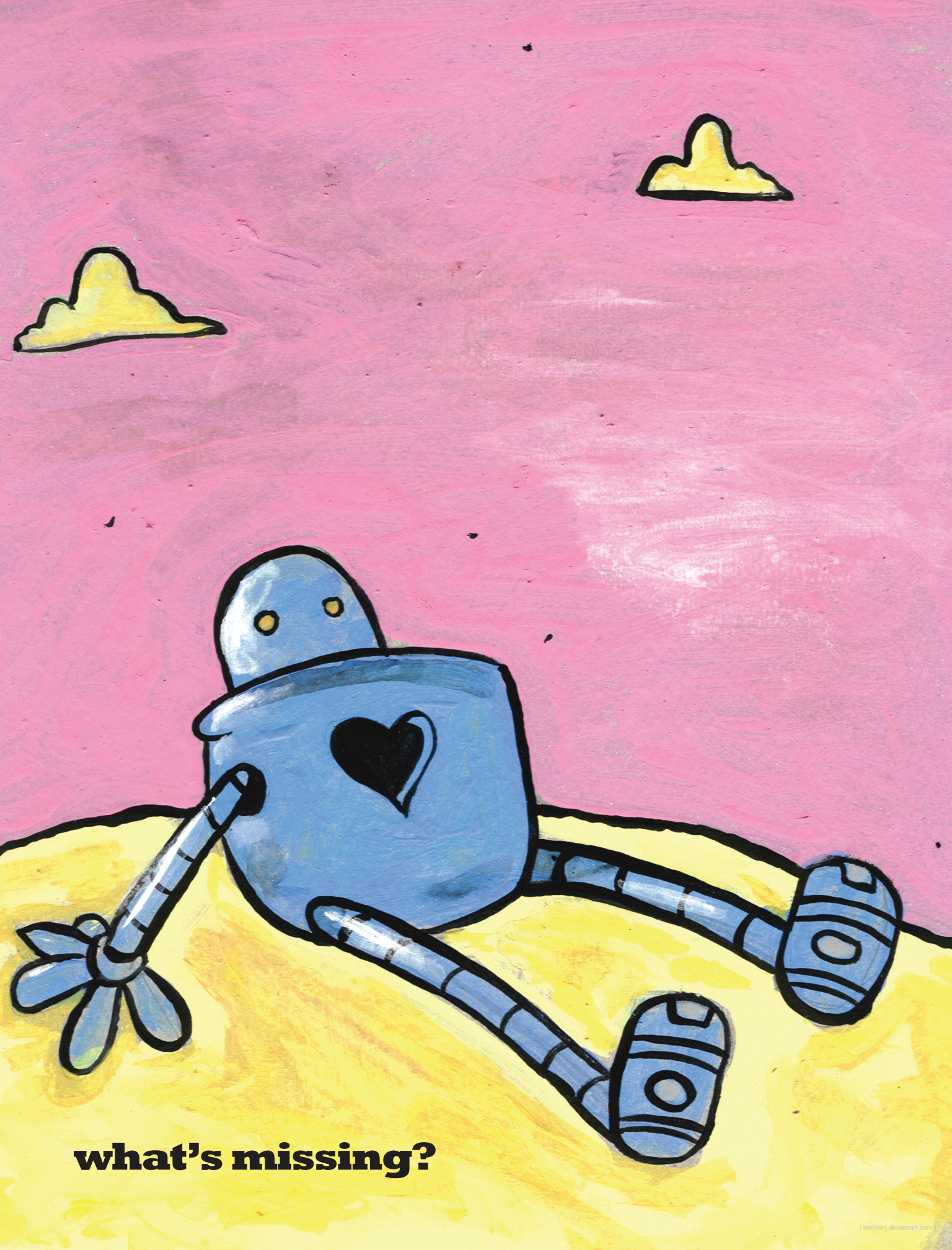
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